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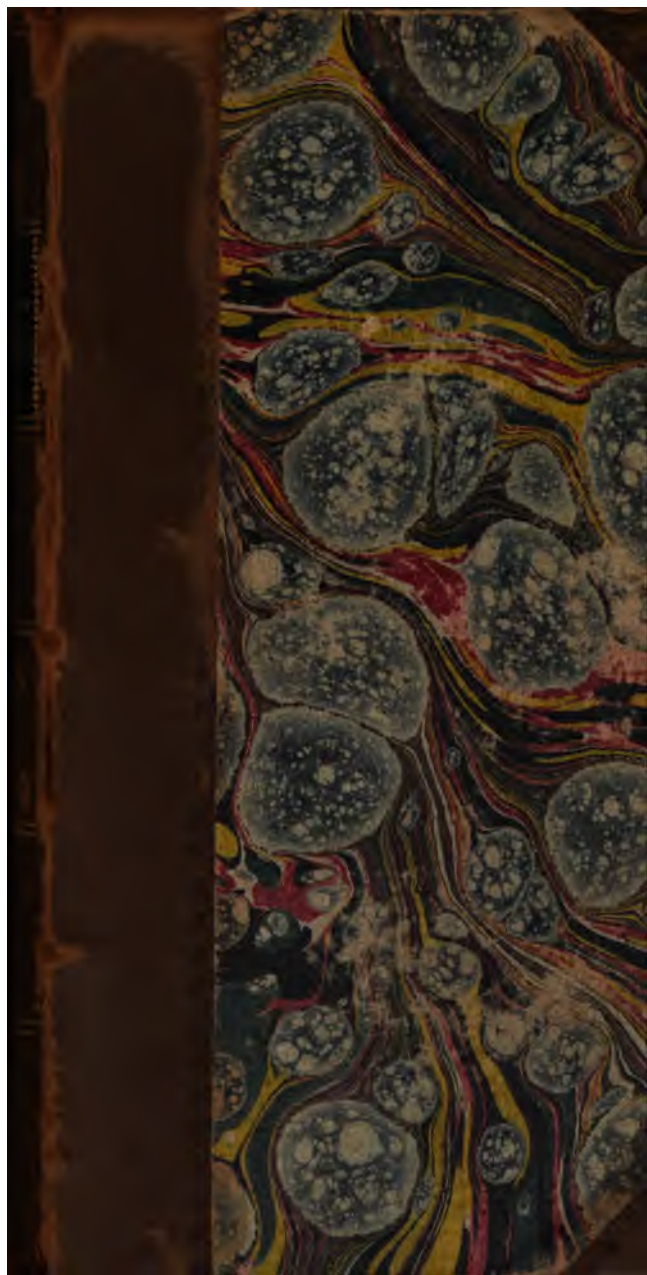
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# CHRISTIAN FREEDOM:

CHIEFLY TAKEN FROM

BOLTON'S "TRUE BOUNDS:"

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'THREE YEARS IN ITALY,' 'GEORGIANA  
AND HER FATHER,' 'A SISTER'S STORIES.'

"Ye have been called unto liberty, only use not liberty for an  
occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another."

GAL. v. 19.

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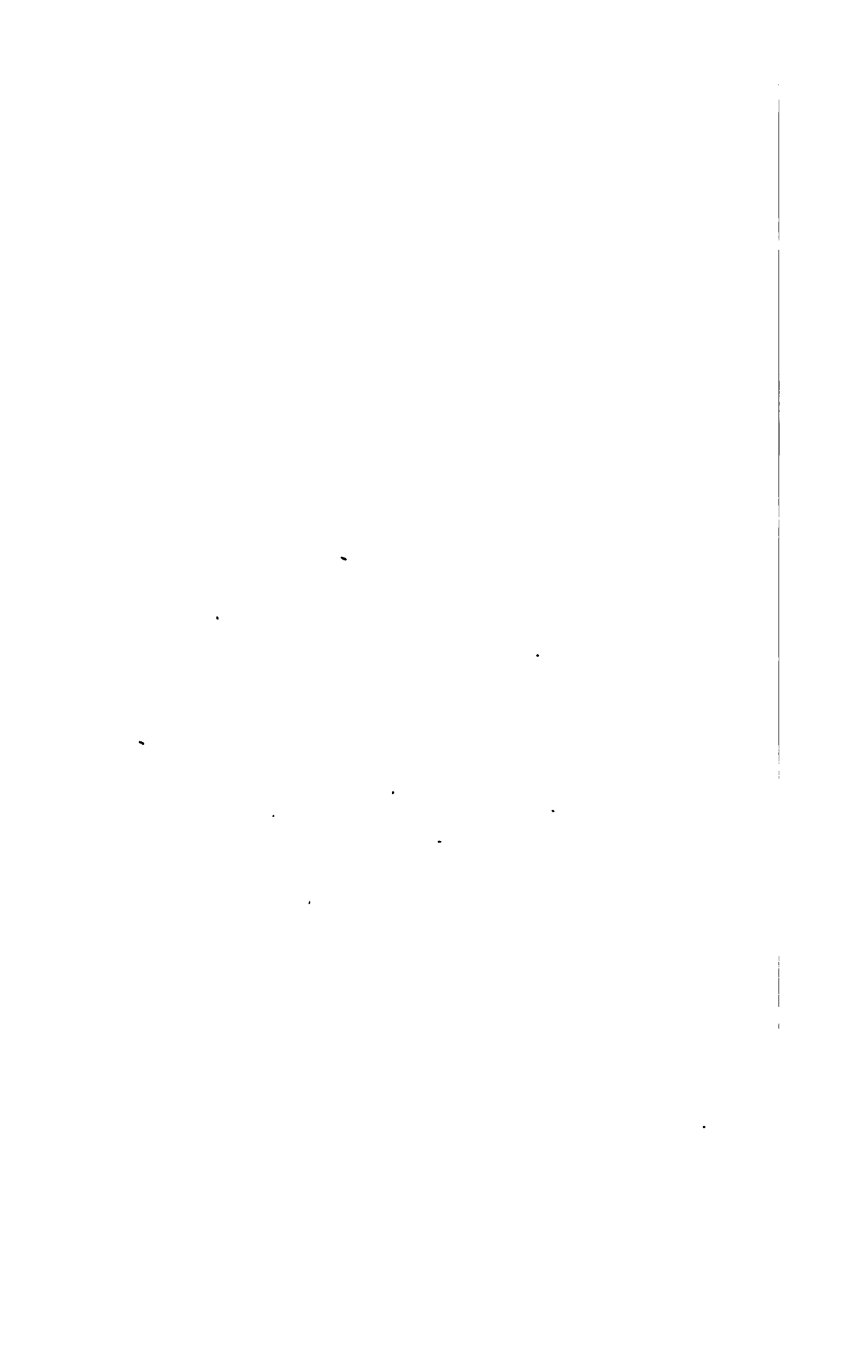
## CHRISTIAN LIBERTY.

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He is the freeman whom the truth makes free,  
And all are slaves beside ; there's not a chain,  
That hellish foes, confed'rate for his harm,  
Can wind around him, but he casts it off  
With as much ease as Samson his green withes.  
He looks abroad into the varied field  
Of nature, and though poor, perhaps, compar'd  
With those whose mansions glitter in his sight,  
Calls the delightful scenery all his own.  
His are the mountains, and the valleys his,  
And the resplendent rivers. His t'enjoy  
With a propriety that none can feel,  
But who, with filial gratitude inspir'd,  
Can lift to heav'n an unpresumptuous eye,  
And, smiling, say—" My Father made them all !"  
Are they not his by a peculiar right,  
And by an emphasis of int'rest his,  
Whose eyes they fill with tears of holy joy,  
Whose heart with praise, and whose exalted mind,  
With worthy thoughts of that unwearied love,  
That plann'd and built, and still upholds a world  
So cloth'd with beauty for rebellious man ?

COWPER.





## P R E F A C E.

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AMIDST the numerous publications with which the press teems in these enlightened days, we contemplate, with satisfaction, many old authors rescued from oblivion. Too long had their valuable productions been suffered to lie mouldering as lumber in their worm-eaten covers. Too long had the faithful witness they bore to the truth as it is in Jesus, been neglected and despised, while new doctrines and new authors were eagerly sought after. We ought, however, to use great caution about whose works we read, and whose opinions we receive; we ought to be very jealous for the truth—many seem to hold it in unrighteousness. The adversary has many emissaries abroad. We ought to keep a good look-out, to watch unto prayer

that we be "no more tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in weight to deceive."

The religion of the Gospel is no new-broached opinion: it is as old as the Bible itself, it runs through the Old Testament as well as the New; and is from everlasting to everlasting the unchangeably established truth of God, sought out and found of all to whom the Holy Spirit has given an understanding heart to understand the Scriptures. These are they who meditate therein day and night, and, with prayer and praise, set themselves to that work and labour of love to which their Divine Master has appointed them.

Such servants were found in their Lord's vineyard in times past, and when their labour was over and they were removed, others supplied their place. Thus the Lord's faithful witnesses never fail. He chooses his instruments, and gives them their work. The Bible is a rich repository, the more it is searched into, the more it will be valued. It is a source of light communicating inexhaustible rays to all the spiritually enlightened in ages past, present, and to come—still the same revelation in mercy given to fallen man. But as the Spirit of God has communicated many truths for the enlight-

ening of his Church : so has Satan sought out many inventions to darken it. He labours strongly to prejudice and weaken the reception of that which all his devices can never overturn. When men are seeking after the truth, then is he most busy to insinuate error, and disguises his notions under so fair a semblance as to bear the impress of truth. Thus are the very elect themselves in danger of being deceived or allured by seemingly spiritual conceptions.

“Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God-speed : for he that biddeth him God-speed is partaker of his evil deeds.” 2 John i. 9—11.

The enemy no longer assails us in his true character, (as a prince of darkness,) he transforms himself into an angel of light, the more effectually to blindfold us. A plausible mask of truth veils the face of the father of lies, while with subtle arguments, he instils his poison to sap the very vitals of religion in the heart.

To hinder this his malignant purpose, the little volume now presented to the public has been

written, originally by an old divine, Samuel Bolton, and published in the year 1645.

Extracting sweets from this old author has been my delightful, and, I trust, profitable occupation. I have made considerable alterations in the language, the style, and in some instances, the sense of an obscure passage.

Many reflections have been added, and many redundancies lopped off. Much of the tiresome repetition, together with the numerous obsolete and quaint expressions of the olden times are left out : and I trust I may be pardoned this liberty by those who appreciate the old mode of writing, under the consideration of the many modern readers who prefer modern style, and modern language to the verbose diction of former times.

May the blessed and Holy Spirit, which is powerful in operation, impress upon our hearts the love of that truth, which is made obvious to our sight. May a sound judgment be given to us to discern things which differ, and grace to choose the good and reject the evil. Thus may we be guided in the way of faith and obedience, and upheld when the storm of persecution rages. For that it will again fall upon the church as it has done in ages past, is as inevitable as it is necessary. The flock must be stricken or it will

wander from the fold ; the watchful shepherd must collect his own sheep, and “ cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land,” that his flock may dwell safely and sleep in the woods.”

All, all is wisely and mercifully ordered, and working together for good to the church—to each member individually, as well as the body collectively.

“ I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth.” Amos ix. 9.

Times of trial are sifting times. God is at work for this purpose, and so is man, but with different ends in view. God sifts for the preservation of the grain ; man sifts to discover the bran. God’s trials are for the purpose of bestowing graces ; man tries us to expose our corruptions.

The wheat must be separated from the chaff. The tree must be shaken to bring down all the dead branches.

Few men will stand forth for religion when it is under contempt, but when it is honourably received, it has many friends. When the house of Obed-Edom was blessed because the ark was there, many desired to have it, who shunned it when followed by the judgments of God.

If religion be the undoing of worldly gain, then will worldly men turn their backs upon it; but will quickly veer about if it be found to bring prosperity.

This nation is highly favoured of the Lord; it has been honoured above the honours of other nations, for the church of Christ has been strengthened, and preserved, and flourished here.

England has been as an impenetrable rock to the enemies of the Lord, and a refuge to his friends. She has been a helper of the helpless, the restorer of the lost, a relief in danger, a shelter to the houseless, a home to the wanderer. May this be still her appointed office. When the threatening storm descends, may England be found fighting on the Lord's side, so shall her own preservation be sure, the God of all mercy and grace will be her strong tower, a bulwark round about her, and a star to guide her under all the changes of his providence, and she shall still be a favoured instrument in advancing the cause of true religion, and promoting the glory of God. With the prayer of the apostle, I conclude. For my readers, "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with

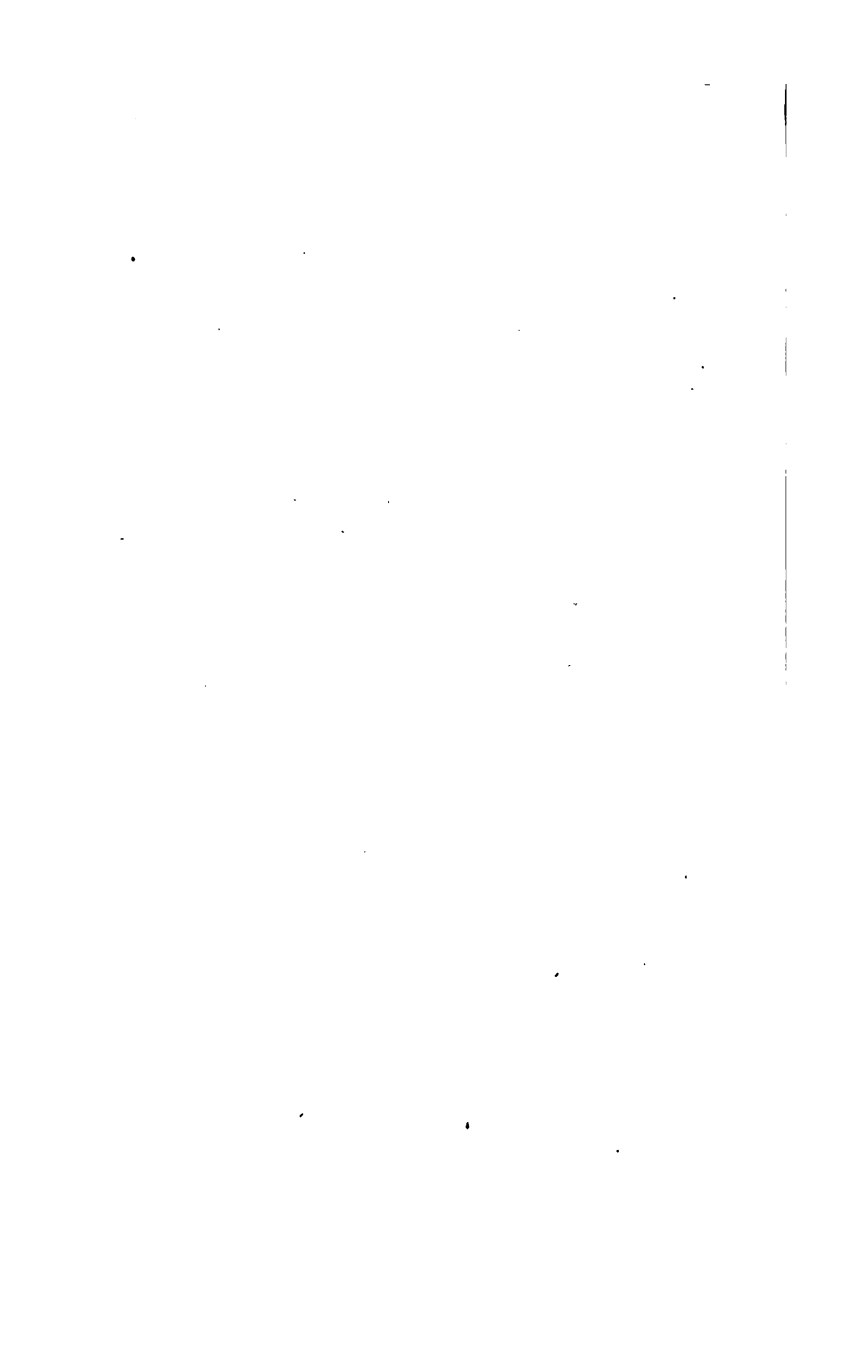
might by his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory, and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

S. M.

*Clapham Common,  
Sept. 22, 1834.*





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# CHRISTIAN FREEDOM.

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## CHAPTER I.

*If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.—JOHN viii. 36.*

No small part of the grievous sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ was, that he endured the contradiction of sinners, which sufferings are detailed at large in this chapter, John viii. from the 12th verse to its conclusion. In almost every verse, we see the Jews setting forward their own obstinate rebellious will, in proud opposition to his divine and infinite wisdom. Every word that he spoke was cavilled at, and thwarted, and contradicted by his self-righteous opposers; some there were, however, among the Jews, as may be seen in the 30th verse, on whose rebellious hearts the word came with softening power, to whom our Lord did most

particularly address himself in cautioning, admonishing, and encouraging them. "If ye continue in my word, then ye are my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Verse 31.

To which, not they, (as appears by the 37th verse) but the unbelieving Jews answered, "We are Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: How sayest thou, ye shall be made free?" Christ could soon have put to silence this proud boasting, by reminding them of their past subjugation to the Egyptian and Babylonian yoke, and at that very moment to the Roman people.

Corporal bondage, however, seems beneath his consideration in comparison of the sin-en-slaved soul. "Whosoever," he answered, "com-mitteth sin is the servant of sin." To which he adds what their future doom must be: *cast out*. They had been admitted into the house of the Lord; they were in the visible church; but there they cannot abide. "Cast out the bond-woman and her son," is the irrevocable sentence. This our Lord illustrates by the son and the servant: "the servant abideth not in the house for ever: the son abideth ever."

Still they are told of the freedom which may be obtained. And though the work be difficult,

yet, He who abides in the house for ever, the son, can effect it. "If the son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed."

Every man's natural state is one of bondage. He is in bondage to sin, to Satan, and to the law. This is the soul's bondage, it is a universal bondage, a willing bondage, a cruel bondage, from which neither price, nor power of our own, can deliver, nor redeem us.

But this deliverance and this redemption, Christ hath wrought out, and purchased for, and installed all true believers into.

This is true and real freedom. Let us now speak of its nature, which is quite different from other kinds of freedom spoken of. It is not the freedom which all nature may be said to enjoy, neither is it that political freedom of the state or nation to which the Jews imagined Christ referred, when their answer was, that being Abraham's seed, they must be free. Nor could it possibly be that corrupt and sinful freedom, which the word libertinism expresses. This is an abuse of this holy and pure doctrine; it is a fearful turning of the grace of God into wantonness. Far different is the exhortation of the apostle—"Brethren, ye are called unto liberty; but use not liberty as an occasion to the flesh." Gal. v. 13.



A child of God could not plead for such a liberty, nor would he wish that sin might abound, because the grace of God abounds. On the contrary, the cry of the renewed heart is continually; "God forbid." Sin is bondage, not liberty to the people of God.

There is a corrupt and sinful freedom spoken of by Jude. "There are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." Whom, though their lips may confess, their lives deny. From such practices, Peter warns the servants of God to turn: "As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness;" —to make the religion, the truth of God, that Christian liberty so dearly purchased, a cloke, a cover, a pretence to sin, is a most dangerous, damnable doctrine.

The liberty wherewith Christ has made his people free, is a spiritual, a heavenly freedom. His own dear-bought purchase, his own precious dowry, revealed in the gospel, and conveyed to his church, his spouse, to whom Christian faith is also given, for the maintenance of which we are called on to contend against all oppugners and underminers of true Christian

liberty. "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ made you free." Gal. v. 1. "Ye are bought with a price, be not ye the servants of men." 1 Cor. vii. 23. Christ's freedom is spiritual, it is divine, it is a freedom altogether opposed to our former bondage. It is no imaginary freedom, it is real. Many fancy themselves free, when they are really in bondage, but those only are free indeed, whom the Son makes free. This freedom is universal and lasting. It is a deliverance from that which was formerly in bondage; but we must take good heed not to make our liberty our bondage, or our bondage our liberty, as too many are prone to do.

If ever the Lord's jubilee be proclaimed and pronounced in the soul, that soul shall hear no more of a return to bondage. Sin, Satan, and the law, can never finally destroy it. "The servant abideth not in the house for ever." Cast out the bond-woman and her son, they shall not inherit, the servants of the law are not the heirs of the promise, they must be dismissed, "but the son abideth in the house for ever," whose inheritance is perpetual, and whose release from bondage is everlasting. The freedom is that of the Father's house, begun here in grace, and consummated in glory.

How great has been the deliverance which Christ has wrought, in wresting asunder the

chain which Satan bound. We were his prisoners, the strong man kept the house, but the stronger came and spoiled him of his armour wherein he trusted. Luke xi. 21, 22. "Christ came into the world, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the Devil." Heb. ii. 14; 15.

By a strong hand the children of Israel were brought out of Egypt. By a strong hand, and an arm lifted up to save, Christ seized the prey from the power of Satan, and let his people go free. He has freed us from sin, from all sin; its guilt, its defilement, its dominion. Sin shall not condemn us, nor bring the wrath of God upon us, Christ having interposed himself between us, and that wrath. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Rom. viii. 1. Who can condemn whom Christ acquits? He shall himself be called to an account as soon. Whosoever thou art that hast an interest in Christ, go on thy way rejoicing; sin shall not condemn thee, for Christ has satisfied for sin.

Where would be the justice of God if he required anything of thee, after having received the full and sufficient sacrifice of Christ? For "God laid on him the iniquity of us all." Isa. liii. And Christ discharged the debt, he paid

the uttermost farthing, and God said he was satisfied, his anger is turned away, he is appeased. "This is my well-beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself. His blood, his scourges, his sufferings, was a tremendous sin-offering, and as such could not but be availing. Having finally accomplished that for which he came, he promises the gift of his spirit to convince the world of sin, (for even to know that we are sinners, as well as that there is a Saviour, must be the Holy Spirit's operation,) and of righteousness, to which, he adds, "because I go to the Father, and ye shall see me no more." John xvi. 10. That is, you shall see me no more in the same way, no longer as a sufferer, no longer as a satisfier of the justice of God for sin, that work being complete, for which he descended from his throne of glory. There was nothing to prevent his ascending again to the place from whence he descended, but, had the work been not finished, had the justice of God been not satisfied, had the guilt of but one sin of one individual lain upon him, then Christ would still have remained held down under the chain of death, and the power of the grave, from which he could never have been released, nor have ever arisen to behold his

Father's face in glory. But justice was fully satisfied, and we are authorised boldly to demand, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Rom. viii. 33, 34. Paul does not say, who shall accuse? but who shall condemn? We have accusers many; sin, Satan, conscience, &c. but none can condemn; the issues of life and death not being committed to such hands. "Christ bore our sins in his own body on the tree." Condemnation for sin is therefore taken away, so likewise is its punishment; we are neither under the curse, nor the wrath of God; and we are freed from the calamities which they entail.

Take away the body, and the shadow must needs be removed: sin is the body, and punishment the shadow which attends and follows it. When sin is taken away, so will its punishment. All God's dispensations are appointed in mercy.

It cannot be doubted that eternal punishment can never lay hold on any whom Christ has freed and justified; yet they are not exempt from afflictions, for God does afflict those whose sins he pardons, but they are chastisements not

appointed to wound, but to heal. They are salutary medicines prepared by a heavenly physician, and administered when most needed. A Father's hand presents the cup, and a Father's love blesses whilst he invites us to drink it up. "For whom the Father loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Heb. xii. 6. Not with the weighty whip of the taskmaster, not with the knotted cords of monkish discipline, but with the gentle rod of the careful shepherd, directing the sheep and feeble lambs into the safest path.

We are not enjoined to such penances and satisfaction for sin, as popish penalties enact, for we know that it cost more to redeem a soul, therefore we must let that alone for ever.

The afflictions which wicked men endure, are the penal part of the curse, and have nothing medicinal in them; they are the effects of vindictive justice, not of fatherly mercy; very different are these from God's dealings with his people, all directed, all ending in love; to make us partakers of his holiness here, and his glory hereafter. David says, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word." He also said that it was good for him to have been afflicted. Every child of God experiences the same.

## CHAPTER II.

*Christ frees his people from the dominion of sin, and from the curse denounced against the transgression of the law.*

CHRIST has freed us from the dominion of sin. "Sin shall not have dominion over you." And why? "For ye are not under the law, but under grace." Rom. vi. 14. While we were under the law, sin had indeed full dominion; not only had it possession in us, but dominion over us, it was a voluntary, free subjugation; an entire resignation of the will and desires to the motions and services of sin: stream, wind, and tide, bore us rapidly downwards; but grace stopped the current. Grace, sovereign grace, free and unsought for, found us, and brought us to Christ, whose blood sealed our new covenant of grace and freedom.

Yet, though delivered from the dominion and power of sin, still we feel its presence, its corrupt stirrings and workings causes us many a sad heart and wet eye; yet Christ has conquered it

in us, its dominion is gone, there may be the turbulency, but the prevalency of sin shall be no more. There may be the stirrings of corruption, as was said of Carthage, that Rome was more troubled when it was half destroyed, than entirely so. It is the same with the believer, sin is a greater grievance to him when subdued, than when it reigned. Still it works, but its workings are checked, they are rather workings for life than from life, they are not uncontrolled as formerly. Sin is under command. It may indeed still get advantage, and tyrannize over the soul, but its sovereignty is at an end. It may seat itself, and play the tyrant in this or that particular act, but it shall be enthroned as a king no more; it shall govern no more, though sin may still be alive in the members, to yield it a willing voluntary obedience. No, never again.

St. Augustine set down man under four conditions, which are these: before the law, we neither fight nor strive against sin; under the law we fight, but are overcome; under grace, we fight and conquer; in heaven all is conquest, and no more combats to all eternity.

By grace we are enabled daily to fight, and daily to conquer; sin shall not have dominion over us. Our kings are become our captives;



they which were on the throne, are now in chains. Formerly it was not so, the willing mind rendered a willing obedience. Every sin, every temptation issued its authoritative command, and the sinful heart stood ready to admit the power, and was taken captive at pleasure.

But sin is now broken in the tempting; there is no allowing of it in the understanding; there is no admission of it in the soul; no closing with it in the will; no embracing of it in the affections, its workings are wounded and broken. Yet still it is alive in our members. In the flesh dwelleth no good thing; for though we delight in the law of God after the inner man, there is another law in our members warring against the law of our mind, &c.<sup>1</sup> Therefore while in the body we have a perpetual warfare to carry on between the flesh and the spirit. Judicially it is dead. Christ has sentenced it. Christ has condemned it in the flesh. In his death, the death-blow of sin was struck.

God has chosen to put sin to a lingering death, even the death of the cross for the greater punishment of sin, and the greater humiliation of the saints who are thus called on to exercise prayer, and lay hold on faith, by which the

<sup>1</sup> See Rom. vii.

corruption and power of sin are broken. Christ on the cross bruised the serpent's head. His power was irrecoverably broken. The Saviour's heel was bruised by him.

‘ The Saviour was to be incarnate, to become man, *the seed of the woman*. It behoved him to suffer ; his heel, namely, his humanity to be bruised to death ; that by his death he should make a full conquest over the Devil, and destroy his works, who had now overcome and destroyed mankind, and so recover the captives out of his hand ; he shall bruise thy head, to wit, while thou bruisest his heel.’ <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Marrow of modern divinity.

## CHAPTER III.

*Believers in Christ are free from the law as a covenant of works, not as a rule for their conduct.*

WE now proceed to the freedom which Christ has given us from the law. "We are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." Rom. vii. 3, 6. "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." Gal. ii. 19. "If ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law." Gal. v. 18. "Ye are not under the law, but under grace." Rom. vi. 14.

The ceremonial law was a yoke which neither we, nor our fathers were able to bear; yet if we had only been delivered from it, grievous and insupportable still, would have been our bondage, but we are farther delivered from the moral law as a covenant. It is not now a condition, on the obedience of which depends eternal life. But it is a covenant, under which we must

stand until we come over to Christ ; this being God's merciful purpose to drive us out of ourselves, and to bring us over unto Christ.

Thus the apostle demands,—“ But if the inheritance be not by the law, wherefore then serveth the law ? ” To which he answers, “ the law was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come.” Gal. iii. 19.

It was added to the promise to discover transgressions, to make sin and wrath appear, to sentence and humble us for sin. In short, that we might see the terms on which we stood, and so be brought out of self, and over to Christ, expecting nothing in regard to eternal life from the law, or our obedience to it, but all from Christ, in whom alone is our righteousness and peace.

The Scriptures do not tell us that the law was given, as some maintain, as a repetition of the covenant of works made with man in his state of innocency, but the covenant itself. “ And the Lord declared unto you his covenant which he commanded you to perform, even ten commandments, and he wrote them upon two tables of stone.” Exod. xix. 4, 6. Deut. iv. 13.

Here it is expressly called a covenant, and it is generally admitted that part of our freedom by

Christ is from the law-as a covenant; it cannot therefore be understood to be a covenant of grace legally dispensed, as we should then be only free from its legal administrations, and not from the thing itself. Some conceive it to be a covenant of works, though not of life and death; yet that we must stand or fall upon our obedience or disobedience. If that were so, it would be inconsistent with, and altogether opposed to grace, and God would deny himself, and repent of his own mercy, in his promise given four hundred and thirty years before, to which promise the law being added, it could not be opposed to it, else it would be no addition to, but a destruction of the promise. Besides, it is said to have been given into the hands of a mediator, which a covenant of works will not admit of. Works look for a reward, not a mediator.

Moses describeth the righteousness of the law, that the man which doeth these things shall live by them. " But the righteousness which is of faith, speaketh on this wise, that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Rom. x. " As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse : for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things

which are written in the book of the law to do them." Gal. iii. 10. "Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid." Gal. iii. 21.

The law is subservient to the promise and covenant of grace, as the apostle proves in the whole of this third chapter of the Galatians.

We are freed from the law as a covenant. This distinction is generally laid down in answer to the objections against the obligation to the law. The law may be considered as a rule and a covenant, when we read of its being still in force. Again, when we read of the law being abrogated, and that we are freed from it, we understand that it is abrogated as a conditional agreement, not as a rule. But this does not explain what covenant it is; the apostle calls it "the old covenant, under which they were, and from which we are freed." It never could give us life; it never shall give us death. We are dead to it, and it is now dead to us. "The law hath dominion over a man so long as he liveth, for the woman that hath a husband, is bound by the law to her husband, so long as he liveth, but if her husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband."

The husband here represents the law to which we are in subjection while looking to it for justification and salvation. Until it is dead

to us, and we to it, we shall never look for life and righteousness in another. Till the law kill you, and you are dead to it, you will look for righteousness and life in obedience to it. But when once the law hath killed you, and showed you it is dead to you, and can do you no good, and you are dead to it, and can expect nothing from it, then will' you look for life alone by Christ. This was Paul's case; once he expected great things from his obedience to the law. Of himself he says, "I was alive without the law once," that is, without the knowledge of the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died, and the commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death; for sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me." Rom. vii. 7, 9—11.

The law's enlightening, convineing, accusing, condemning power, laid him prostrate and wounded to death. It slew, but could not raise him, it could not comfort him, he expected nothing more from it, he was dead to it and it to him. But in that moment he found life and deliverance. "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live to God." The law hath signed my death warrant, but "my life is hid with Christ in God."

Believers only are freed from the insupportable penalties and curses of the law. "He that believeth not is condemned already, the wrath of God abideth on him," but "there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." As a covenant the law brings condemnation, and nothing else but condemnation; it is not able to save, but it can condemn—though unable to bestow one blessing, it can pour out curses. "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." "Cursed is he that obeyeth not in all things;" which being impossible, the curse must lie upon the failure, if Christ did not interpose his life-giving freedom. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us." Not only did he bear the curse for us, but he was made a curse for us. For it is written, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Thus are we freed from the power of the law—its cord is broken; it can neither pronounce sentence, nor condemnation against any for whom Christ appeared in court. And this purchased privilege is not only now, but for ever. The law can bring no charge against you for future sin; it can never take hold upon you—the obligation is made void, the seal is torn off, the hand-writing is defaced, cancelled, crossed out, nay, torn to pieces, and



the fragments thrown where they can never be gathered up.

“ He hath blotted out the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.” The hand-writing of ordinances includes both the ceremonial and moral law so far as it could concern us. And here the Apostle’s gradation is remarkable. “ He hath blotted out,” but least any should say that it was not entirely blotted out, that still the reading of it is not impossible, he adds, “ He hath taken it away,” but as if this still were not enough, and that it should be said, Yes, but it will be sought for, and found, and brought back—he puts the matter out of all dispute by adding, “ He hath nailed it to the cross;” therefore, the law hath done with believers. Black bills, and bloody indictments it can produce against those who are under it, but against those who are in Christ, it can bring no railing accusation. “ Against such there is no law ” to justify or condemn. “ Who is he that condemneth ? it is Christ that died.” The death of Christ is brought against every charge. That court cannot condemn, which is itself a condemned court; its curses, judgments and sentences are made invalid and powerless. Men who are condemned

have a tongue, but no voice. The law may still have a tongue to accuse, but it has no power to condemn. It cannot fasten condemnation on a believer.

You are under the conduct of the court, but not under its condemnation, Christ in our person and stead being condemned by it. It may condemn sin in us, but it cannot condemn us for sin.

You have appealed from the court, therefore it cannot condemn you. Of this we have an instance in the publican; he was arrested, dragged into the court of justice, sentenced, condemned—but when he made his appeal “God be merciful to me a sinner,” he was acquitted. He flew to Christ and went away justified.

Many make a false appeal by trusting partly in Christ, and partly in themselves. They look to Christ for salvation, but to their own works for sanctification; which is a false appeal, an unsound sandy foundation, into which the tottering fabric they erect, must sink.

They also make a false appeal to Christ, whom the law hath not condemned, who remain unhumbled, unconvinced of their need of a Saviour. By the poor publican we are taught what kind of appeal can reach the mercy-seat. When condemned and cast out of the court

of law, "he stood afar off, and would not so much as lift up his eyes unto heaven; but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." Here is a three-fold prostration of soul and body. Fear and consternation kept him at a distance. "He stood afar off." In shame and confusion of face, "he smote upon his breast," and dared not so much as to lift up his eyes, while he makes his appeal—"God be merciful to me a sinner."

Our appeal to Christ must be total, not partial, not to do something, but every thing for his needy creatures. To him alone is all the honour due. Our appeal must be for grace as well as mercy, for sanctification as well as salvation. We must owe our holiness as well as our happiness to Christ. Our appeal must be that of an humbled self-excluded sinner. A man must be condemned and cast out of one court before he will appeal to another. So we never think of casting ourselves upon Christ before we are condemned by Moses. Paul says, "We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." Rom. iii. 9—11. "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them

who are under the law : that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." Verse 19. When the law has accused and sentenced us, our mouths are stopped, we are found guilty before God, and having nothing to expect but condemnation from his justice, we have no other appeal but to his mercy in Christ Jesus. And having done so, even the law must acquit us—we are out of the reach of its penalties, for it can take no hold of him who has fled to Christ, and found in him a sanctuary. Here he is shut in, he has found the ark of safety. If the law threaten, Christ promises. If the law curse, Christ blesses. He is secure from every threatened danger, it can never reach him in his hiding-place.

If God did but let one spark of his wrath to fall upon our conscience, then should we be certified of the grace, and mercy, and privilege of being Christ's free men.

## CHAPTER IV.

*Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect.—*  
Rom. viii. 33.

THIS seems a strange question, "Who shall lay any thing?" There are charges in abundance brought against them. Satan is a grievous calumniator. He is called "the accuser of the saints night and day." Rev. xii. 10. He even accused God himself. In his temptation of our first parents, he charged Jehovah of envy towards his creatures. He persuaded them that because the tree would make them wise, they were forbidden to eat of it. (Happy for them had they turned from such suggestions, and remained ignorant of evil as in their primeval state.) Still the same wicked spirit delights in bringing charges against the mercy and justice of God, vilely insinuating that man may sin, and yet find mercy, or that if he sin, there is no mercy for him. Thus he stretches the justice of God further than the bounds of the

gospel, and his mercy beyond the bounds of his truth.

Satan also accuses man to God, as in the instance of Joshua the high priest. Zech. iii. 1—4. He is ever laying crimes to our charge, but when harassed and tempted, let us remember Joab's answer, when asked why he had not killed Absalom. "Thou thyself heard what the king commanded, that Absalom should not be hurt, and if I had done this thing, thou thyself would have been the first, who would have accused me to the king." So may we say to Satan, thou thyself dost know that God has forbidden this thing; and if I do it, thou thyself will be the first to accuse me before God. This is the way of our adversary, first to allure us to sin, and then to become our accuser. But he often condemns whom God commends, as in Job's case, as if he knew the servant of God, better than God himself. However blameless his outward actions, he found fault with Job's intentions, and told the Almighty that he was deceived in him; for whatever he might think to the contrary, Job did not serve him for nought; he was avaricious, mercenary, fenced in, and hedged round about with undeserved favours.

But what avails the accusation or condemnation of Satan? God has not placed the issues

of life and death in such hands. A condemned person, though he may have a voice, has not power to condemn another, so Satan being condemned, cannot condemn the Lord's saints. Though his accusation against Joshua was true; for Joshua *was* in his filthy garments, yet God would not own it. "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan. Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"

Wicked men accuse the elect of God; sometimes justly, of sins committed, but forgiven, and here they show their malice in remembering what God has not remembered. For the sins of his people are cast behind his back, into the depths of the sea, they shall be sought for, but not found; they are blotted out as a thick cloud. Sometimes the accusations are altogether unjust, and with David they may say, "they laid to my charge things that I knew not." Ps. xxxv. 11.

Conscience is a great accuser of the Lord's elect; sometimes truly and sometimes falsely. Many an old crossed-out cancelled bill has this censurer raked up. Often however, it is found a faithful monitor, whose charges ought to be attended to. The conscience of Joseph's brethren smote them when they were evil intreated in Egypt, and forced them to acknowledge their fault. "We are verily guilty concerning our

brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us and we would not hear." Gen. xlii. 21.

David's heart smote him after he had numbered the people. In these instances had they attended to the still small voice within, conscience might have had a restraining influence, but instead of a bridle, it now becomes a whip; instead of a curb, it is a scourge.

When it comes in with the evidence of God's word, it is then his voice which we must hear. If the sun do not shine upon the dial, it is useless; but if the light of its beams are thrown upon it, we may mark the progress of time. Conscience is erroneous when it has not the evidence of God's word to verify its accusations, and may be compared to a litigious troublesome fellow, with false indictments in his hand, or old forgotten cancelled obligations; but we have to deal with a righteous judge, who will have nothing to do with such things. "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." 1 John iii. 20.

Here then we see that neither the law, nor Satan, nor conscience, can bring condemnation to the Lord's elect. God has justified, who then shall accuse?

The law may accuse Christ's freemen, in dis-



covering to them how far they come short of the glory of God ; how far they have erred and strayed from the path of righteousness ; how weak and insufficient in themselves to do as they ought, or to leave undone what they ought. Thus the law becomes a school-master, in humbling and proving the Lord's people whom it cannot condemn. If this be denied, then we deny the law as a rule of conduct.

But can the law bring any just accusation against those who are not under it? From its judgments, from its curse, from its condemnation we are exempt, but still we are under its commands, our conduct is to be governed by its rule, and so far as we walk not according to it, it may accuse, though not condemn. There is no further power left in the law, than what is for our good, for our humiliation and edification. If it be true that we are freed from the law as a rule, or direction of life, (and so to be freed were not freedom, but bondage,) then, our breaches of the law are not sin, if it be no law for us, then we sin not in breaking it, no more than we do when we break the laws of Spain, or any other nation with which we have nothing to do. That the law's directive power was not made void, is plain, the law being given four hundred and thirty years after the promise.



The law, after justification by the promise, serves as a rule of walking with God to all manner of pleasing.

There is a two-fold subjection, that of a son, and of a slave. The subjection of a son is part of our freedom. The rigid obedience of the law is not now required, for not only did it command difficult, but impossible things ; it laid a yoke upon us, which neither we, nor our fathers could bear, and in which it would not, nor could not, afford us the slightest assistance or concurrence. Like the scribes and pharisees, who laid heavy burthens upon men's shoulders, but would not touch them with one of their fingers. The law commands, but gives neither strength nor grace ; it requires, as Pharaoh from the Israelites, the whole tale of bricks, without providing any straw : it abates nothing, and answers expostulation with " see thou to that."

Far different is the gospel which frees us from impossibilities.

" Yet all things are possible, not in respect of us, but in respect of God, who hath undertaken to work in us, and for us." Isaiah xxvi. 12. Chrysostom blesseth God, that " that which God required of him, he had given to him." Indeed, the works of the gospel are as great as any works of the law, nay, greater, to

believe being a greater work than to do all the works of the law : but God has given us more strength, we have communion with the power and strength of Christ, without whom we can do nothing, and with whom we shall do all things ; feeble in ourselves, but strong in him. Weak believer, you have a strong Redeemer ! The law was a spiritual law, but the gospel is the law of the Spirit ; Rom. viii. 2. and thereby we are enabled to do what is commanded to be done. Rom. vi. 12. The Spirit enjoins that we should not let sin reign in our mortal bodies, and afterwards declares that “ sin shall have no dominion in our mortal bodies,” this shows that the Spirit helps our infirmities, doing in us what we could never do in ourselves. Here is a promise and a reason alleged. “ For you are not under the law, but under grace ; ” had we been under the law, we could have expected no such assistance, but being under grace, the power is given.

The rigour of the law required personal and perfect obedience, not allowing any to work for us, or to help us in what we are enjoined to perform, but grace has freed us from this rigour, and God accepts our obedience by another.

Christ has paid our two-fold debt, the debt of sin committed, and of service omitted. He

alone could fulfil all righteousness for us, and hence we are said to be complete in Christ, though in ourselves altogether imperfect.

Such was the rigour of the law, that it required universal, actual obedience, not a tittle of which must fail, or eternal condemnation was the consequence. "Curæd is he who obeys not every thing written in the book of the law to do it." Gal. iii. 10. Desires and endeavours were of no avail. If we fail in the least tittle, we are irretrievably gone. No repentance, no tears, no prayers, no future watchfulness can make amends for what is past; we are utterly lost, gone for ever. The gospel admits of repentance, but the law receives it not, to the very tittle it calls for exact obedience.

In the gospel we see that our God writes his law upon our hearts, and makes it our strong desire to do his will, and therefore he accepts affections for actions, and the desire for the ability.

The Christian's course is made up of desires, of mournings, of thirstings, of bewailings. "Oh that my ways were directed." "O miserable man that I am." Here is gospel perfection.

Adam wanted will more than power, the Christian wants the power more than the will: not that the will either is perfect, for as

we cannot do the things we would, there is sin in our members, and also in our wills, being incapable even of willing aright; still the failure of the Lord's people proceeds more from the want of power than of will, for as the apostle says, "to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not." And God has mercy for *can-nots*, but none for *will-nots*. God can distinguish between weakness and wickedness; while under the law, this weakness is wickedness, such as God hates. Under the gospel, he pities the weakness of the believer, and imputes no wickedness to him; so then under the law, sin is the object of God's hatred, though he pities and pardons the sinner.

The rigour of the law brings threats and terror upon the conscience; the gospel comes with entreaties and love. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God."

"The spirit of the gospel is not one of fear and bondage, but of power and love." Rom. viii. 15. 2 Tim. 1. 7.

To the disobedience of the law, the penalty is eternal death. Terror enforces its enactments, but there is no terror in the gospel, with sweetness and love it brings us a message of peace.

The book of the law was placed between the cherubims, and upon the mercy-seat, to tell us that under the gospel every law comes now from the mercy-seat to the believer.

A new principle of obedience is given, the love of Christ constrains, and what is more powerful than love? it knows no difficulties; things impossible to others, are easy to those who love: "My yoke is easy, my burden is light."

Whom we love, we gladly serve. Jacob served a very hard apprenticeship for Rachel, yet he esteemed the time little, because he loved her. Love shortens time, and facilitates labour. Achilles, when asked what enterprise he found the most easy, answered, that which was undertaken for a friend.

This spirit is that which God himself implants in the hearts of his children, from which their actions spring, and those things which otherwise would be tasks and burdens, are refreshments and delights.

The believer attributes no merit to himself in the duties to which love urges him, while by faith in his Redeemer he knows that his happiness is secure.

"For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith

which worketh by love." Faith, like mercy, sits at the feet of Jesus to hear his word ; and love, like Martha, encompasseth him about with services. Thus faith receives, and love disburses. What we take in by the one, we lay out by the other.



## CHAPTER V.

*Believers are not slaves, but free men.*

**BELIEVERS** are not only freed from sin, Satan, and the law, but from such thralldom over the mind and conscience, as the Pope of Rome usurps. We are not slaves, but free men; for he whom the truth has made free, is free indeed. We are bought with a price, and not to be in bondage to any man, and he to whom we belong has said, "Be not ye called Rabbi; for one is your master even Christ, and all ye are brethren. Neither be ye called masters; for one is your master, even Christ." He may rightfully claim the services of those, whose ransom he has paid with his own blood. Christ, the author and finisher of our faith, is the only allowable spiritual master, therefore the apostle says, "We are not masters of your faith, but helpers of your joy." 2 Cor. ii. 24. There are temporal masters to whom we are enjoined to yield obedi-



ence, being told that the powers which be, are ordained of God, and that in resisting such power, we resist God. But this is quite separate from the Papal authority which arrogates to itself Christ's royal prerogative, and which it is no less criminal to assume, than for us to obey.

## CHAPTER VI.

*The believer's freedom extends to death and the grave, the resurrection of the body, &c.*

OUR freedom farther extends to death and the grave. There is a three-fold death. First, a spiritual death, which is that of the soul in the body, being dead in trespasses and sins, until quickened by the Holy Spirit. Secondly, there is a natural death which separates the soul from the body, and thirdly, there is a death eternal, to which body and soul are consigned for ever.

Death is no longer a curse, its nature is taken away, and its name changed ; it is called a sleep in Christ, a gathering to our fathers, the change which comes, a departing in peace. To the believer it is a father's call ; it is the godly man's wish, the wicked man's terror.

We are freed from the fear of death, in believing that we shall not die until God's time, which is the best time. None can die sooner ; the most wicked man that ever existed, cannot

die sooner than is decreed by him to whom belong the issues of life. All men may say with David, "My times are in thy hands." There is no time however, good for the wicked; death seizes upon him at the moment when he is not aware, as Belshazzar, he is taken when carousing; as Ananias and Sapphira, lying; as the nobleman, unbelieving; as Julian, blaspheming. But the privilege of the saints is, that they shall not die until the best time, when, if they were but rightly informed, they would desire to die.

Men cut down weeds at any time; but will not cut down their corn until the best time. "*You are God's husbandry,*" saith the apostle, you are his wheat, and when you are ripe, when you have done your work, then, and not till then, shall you be gathered into your master's garner.

The grave cannot retain the believer. "O grave, where is thy victory?" Though the body die and turn into dust, yet it shall arise renovated, heavenly, glorious, no longer subject to disease, imperfection, and mortality. "It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." 1 Cor. xv. 43, 44. In a new and glo-

rified state, each one shall be arrayed in splendour and brightness, as the sun shining in the firmament. Dan. xii. 3. Matt. xiii. 43. The body and soul shall be reunited, the same soul to the same body. This is a mystery such as the philosophers of old could not unravel. They amused themselves with dreams and strange fantasies of the transmigration of souls; the restless undying spirit, they imagined, flitted from one body to another, for they knew nothing of him who is the resurrection and the life. Their vain and fruitless speculations never unfolded the real existence and state of the soul and body: that same body, after having been corrupted in the water, or consumed by fire, or returned into dust, or vanished into air, or perhaps food for fish, which fish in their turn had been eaten by man, that this should arise and appear again, is a mystery only to be revealed by that spirit which is wonderful in working. Rev. xx. 13.

When Paul disputed this point at Athens, the Epicurean philosophers laughed at him. 'What will this babbler say?' By the word of divine inspiration this truth is made manifest. "Though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold." Job xix. 26.

When the soul and body shall be reunited, they shall separate no more to all eternity. The death of the body shall free us from death, and its reunion with the soul shall free us from the grave, "for we shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible." &c. 1 Cor. xv. 51—53.

## CHAPTER VII.

*Believers are changed from a state of wrath to a state of mercy—from condemnation to justification—from the Law to the Gospel—from enmity to friendship—from hatred to love, the true incentive to obedience,—from death to life.*

**WE** are freed or changed from a state of wrath, to a state of mercy ; from a state of condemnation, to a state of justification. (Once we were under the condemnation of the law and the gospel ; under the first because we sinned, and under the last, because we believed not.)

From a state of enmity, to a state of friendship. “ And you that were sometimes alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.” Col. i. 21.

From a state of death, to a state of life. “ And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” Eph. ii. 1.

From a state of sin, to a state of service, that we “ being delivered out of the hand of our

enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life." Luke i. 74, 75.

By paying our debt, Christ purchased our services. He freed us from the bondage of misery, that we might take on ourselves the engagements of duty. Paul says, "Therefore brethren we are debtors." Rom. viii. 12. Such service he considered perfect freedom, and he who thinks otherwise is still in bondage.

To serve Christ is a free service, as by his blood he has redeemed us from being slaves, so by his obedience and spirit he has redeemed us to be sons, drawn to his service with the bands of love, not with the cords of fear; not by compulsion, but inclination.

As the love of God was the spring of all his dealings towards us, from the same source, his love in our hearts, flows our obedience to him.

"Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Christ has obtained the last decisive victory for us, from death and the grave, to life and glory. Heaven is the mansion-house, the portion, the inheritance of his saints. "I go to prepare a place for you." It is prepared for them, and they are prepared for it. They are "vessels of mercy which he had afore prepared unto

glory." Being "delivered from the bondage of corruption, they enter into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Could we conceive all from which we have been freed, and from the top of Mount Nebo take a glimpse of the heavenly Canaan, how willingly should we lay the body down, and spread our wings to fly to the favoured land, where "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, what God hath prepared for them that love him." 1 Cor. ii. 9. 'This is spoken of grace, but what is glory? far beyond what we can express, far beyond what we can imagine or anticipate. We have heard it called the "new Jerusalem," "the glorious city," "the joy of the Lord," "the kingdom of glory," "the Father's house." It is heaven; it is light and life ineffable; it is "a weight of glory, nay, a far more exceeding and eternal weight," in which all our light and momentary afflictions will terminate for ever and ever.



## CHAPTER VIII.

*If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*—JOHN viii. 36.

THIS text is the basis on which Christian freedom is built, and on which many have endeavoured to erect their own superstructure of hay and stubble, and such materials as the foundation will not bear. There are many erroneous opinions abroad, which would plead patronage from this doctrine, now about to be vindicated. Many are the false, licentious dogmas which are fathered and fastened on this most excellent, true, and comforting doctrine of Christian liberty. My intention is to prove that neither the text, nor the doctrine will countenance or strengthen the positions and opinions deduced from, and built upon them.

The task is arduous, being that of cutting asunder the strong knots of the practical part of divinity ; and scripture is produced and pleaded by the various judgments of men. The

more difficult the work, the more need there is of prayer, that the Father of light would go before us, and by his own light lead and guide us into the way of all truth. In confidence whereof we will now adventure to launch into these deeps, and examine and try these tenets, to elicit their falsehood or reality. The first question to be propounded and examined, is concerning that important doctrine, "That believers are freed from the law."

I. Is to be freed from the law, any part of our freedom by Christ?

Many passages of the Scriptures seem to declare the abrogation of the law, the following in particular. Jer. xxxi. 31—33. Rom. vii. 1—3. In which, that the apostle speaks of the moral law, is evident from the seventh verse. Also in Rom. vi. 14, and Gal. iii. 19, 24, and again in Gal. iv. 4, 5, and Rom. viii. 2. "For the law of the spirit of life hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Gal. v. 18, bears upon the same. Rom. x. 4. 1 Tim. i. 8—10; all which texts are given to maintain the abrogation of the law. Those which are deduced on the contrary side are also strong. "Do we make void the law through faith? God forbid. Yea, we establish the law." Rom. iii. 31, and Matt. v. 17. Upon these various

texts men have founded their various opinions, for the abrogation of, and obligation to the law. There can be no question that the words of Scripture on both sides, are the words of truth; and though they seem to be as the accusers of Christ, now saying one thing, and now another, yet when sifted and explored, their perfect accordance will be discovered; like Nathan and Bathsheba, they will be found speaking the same thing.

But that we may not beat the air, and spend our breath for nought, let us inquire into two particulars.

1. What is meant by the word law? and in what sense is the word used in the Scriptures?

The word frequently used in the Old Testament for the law, is *Torah*, which is derived from another word, signifying to throw darts, and also to teach, to instruct, to admonish, in which sense the term often recurs. "The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death." Prov. xiii. 14, and iv. 2. &c. In the New Testament the word *law* is derived from another word, which signifies to distribute, because the law does distribute, or render to God and man their due. In short, the word law, in its natural signification in both the Old and New Testaments, signifies any doctrine,

instruction, law, ordinance, statute, divine or human, which teaches, directs, commands, or binds men to any duty which they owe to God or man.

It is not necessary to notice all the acceptations of the word law. A few may be mentioned. Sometimes it includes the entire of the Old Testament, the books of Moses, Psalms, and Prophets. Thus the Jews understood it. "We have heard out of the law, that Christ abideth for ever." "This cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled which was written in their law, they hated me without a cause." John xv. 25. In 1 Cor. xiv. 21, Paul quotes the words of Isaiah, saying, "It is written in the law."

Sometimes it comprehends the whole word of God, promises and precepts. "The law of God is perfect, converting the soul." It takes in sometimes the five books of Moses. Gal. iii. 21. John i. 45. Luke xxiv. 44. "All must be fulfilled which is written in the law of Moses." Gal. iv. 21. John v. 46.

Sometimes it is the moral law only, sometimes the ceremonial, and sometimes it includes all, moral, ceremonial, and judicial. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth by Jesus Christ." John i. 17. Grace in opposition

to the moral, truth in opposition to the ceremonial, which was but the shadow. By temporal things spiritual things were shadowed forth, or typified.

The ceremonial law was an appendix to the first table of the moral law, and is an ordinance containing precepts of worship to the Jews when they were in their infancy. 1. To keep them under hope. 2. To preserve them from will-worship. 3. To be a wall of separation between them and the gentiles, and this, undoubtedly, is abrogated.

The judicial law was an appendix to the second table, and was an ordinance containing precepts, concerning the government of the people in civil matters. 1. That there might be a rule of common and public equity. 2. That they might be distinguished from others. 3. That the government of Christ might be typified, and so far as it was typical of Christ, it is ceased; but that which is of common and general equity, remains still in force. It is a maxim, that those judgments which are common and natural, are moral and perpetual. But in these two we find few dissenters; all the controversy will be in the third, which is the moral law, scattered throughout the whole Bible, and summed up in the decalogue.

For substance, it contains such things as are good and holy, and accordant to the will of God, being the image of the divine will, a beam of his own excellency, the sum and substance of which, is love to God and man.

Here then is the disputed point. Is this law abrogated, or is it still in force? The query is, are believers freed from the moral law? From its enactments, maledictions, and curses; from its indictments and accusations, from its coactions and irritations, &c. believers are certainly freed; but are they freed from obedience to it?

Some there are, and that not a few, who positively and peremptorily affirm, that since Christ fulfilled the law, it is no rule for us; we are under no obligation to obey it; others maintain that it does still remain in force, as a rule of obedience, though it be in other respects abolished. Still, I maintain, though no longer under the curse and penalties of the law, we are under its conduct and commands.

Some say that we are freed from the law as given by Moses, but bound to it as transmitted by Christ. That we are subject to the commands of the law, not as Moses gave it, but as Christ renewed it. Christ, from his own undisputed authority, says, "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another."

Christ is both a Saviour and a Lord. He gives a new commandment, not one which was not before, but a commandment renewed by him, and coming immediately from his own authority. We must therefore admit the moral law as a rule of Christian obedience ; there will be no cavilling at it, when considered as the law promulgated by Moses, and handed over to us renewed by Christ. "Great peace have they which love the law, and nothing shall offend them." And indeed the law, considered as a rule, can no more be abolished or changed, than the nature of good and evil can be changed. The law is an epitome of that doctrine which inculcates piety towards God, and charity towards our neighbour, temperance and sobriety towards ourselves. Its substance is moral and eternal, and cannot be abrogated. We grant that the circumstances were but temporary, and changeable ; we have nothing now to do with Moses, as the promulgator of the law, nor with Mount Sinai ; nor the expiration of the fifty days after the coming out of Egypt ; nor yet as the law was written on tables of stone, and delivered with "thunders, and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud, so that all the people in the camp trembled, and the whole

mount quaked greatly." Exod. xix. 16, 18. Here the terrors of the law are represented, with which Christians have nothing to do. We have done with time, and place, and circumstance; we look not to Sinai, the hill of bondage, but to Sion, the mountain of grace. We hear no longer the terrible "sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words, which voice they that heard, intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more," Heb. xii. and which even caused Moses exceedingly to fear and quake.

Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, has given us a new law divested of terror. He has given us the law of love, stamped with the impress of his own divine image, inviting us to do the will of God, not by force, or necessity, but with a willing mind, which mind, he also gives us, so that we desire to obey, not thereby expecting life, nor favour; neither is it from fear of death, nor the rigour of punishment. This is the law which remains in force as the rule of our lives. It is the standing authoritative rule which condemns sin in the faithful, though it cannot condemn the faithful for sin. Far be it from us, that profane doctrine of taking away the law which remains an inflexible rule of living, by the teaching, admonishing, chiding, reproof of which, we are prepared to every good work.



The moral law is perpetual and immutable; this is an everlasting, incontrovertible truth, that the creature is bound to worship and to obey his Creator. The greater his benefits, the more he is bound to serve God; to be free from such obedience, is to be the servant of sin.

In confirmation of this, we have two positions to advance. 1. That the law in substance (we speak not of the circumstances and accessaries to it) remains as an existing rule of walking to the people of God. 2. That there was no end, no use, for which the law was given, that might not consist with grace, and be serviceable to the advancement of the covenant of grace. Make good these two positions, and those doctrines which abrogate, and free us, from the moral law, will fall to the ground.

In substance, the moral law comprehends the decalogue, or ten commandments, which forbids, and commands all those things, which are morally evil and good, and cannot be changed, nor abolished. For what is the law in substance, but that of nature engraven in the heart of man in innocency? And what was that, but the express idea, or representation of God's own image; even a beam of his own holiness, which can no more be abolished, or changed, than the nature of good and evil? Therefore this law

remains an unchangeable rule of walking to all believers. To prove which, whole legions of authorities might be produced, even as many almost as there are living men; we have a cloud of witnesses, if we see to the concordant confessions of Christian and reformed churches. The Helvetian church has this confession, 'Thus far is the law of God abrogated, in that it hath not power to condemn believers, &c. Notwithstanding we do not disdainingly reject the law, but condemn them as heresies which are taught against the law, that it is not a rule of walking.' The French church has this, 'We believe all the figures of the law to be taken away by the coming of Christ, although the truth and substance of them do continue to us in him, and are fulfilled to us in him; but the doctrine of the law is both used in them to confirm our life; as also, that we may be the more confirmed in the promises of the gospel,' and agreeable to this is the Belgic confession. The church of Wittemberg, 'We acknowledge the law of God whose abridgement in the decalogue, to command the best, most just, and perfect works, and man to be bound to obey the moral precepts of the decalogue. Neither are those precepts which are contained in the Apostles' writings, a new law, but are branches of the old law.'

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Another, 'It is needful to teach men that they must not only obey the law, but also how this obedience pleaseth God.' The Scottish church, 'We do not think we are so freed by liberty, as if we owed no obedience to the law, we confess the contrary.' And our church holds out the same, 'Although the law given of God by Moses, in regard of the rites and ceremonies, doth not bind Christians, neither is any, although a Christian, loosed from the obedience of the commandments which are called moral.' To these might be added many more.

But it may be, all these are of no authority ; they are of no power, and indeed if these things have not the evidence of God's word, they shall be of no power, no authority with us. We may reverence them, and their writings, but we must not build our faith upon them as a sure foundation, for to have our judgments enslaved by any, were contrary to our Christian liberty. "To the law, and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." The word itself will be the best proof from whence our arguments may be drawn. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil ; for verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall



in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." Matt. v. 17, 18. Plain and palpable as this passage is, for the obligation and continuance of the law, yet it has been so misinterpreted, as to make it appear that Christ would not abolish the law until he had fulfilled it, "Christ himself being, (as says the Apostle) the end of the law," Rom. x. 4. that is, the perfecting, and consummating end, not the destroying, abolishing end thereof. The law had arrived to perfection and consummation in Christ, not that of destroying and abolishing.

Here Christ gives a stricter exposition of the law, and vindicates it from the corrupt glosses of the Pharisees, which surely ratifies its continuance, not its abrogation. And in accordance to this opinion, Paul puts the question, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid, yea, we establish the law." How do we establish it?—Not for justification, for here faith makes it void, but faith establishes it, by making it a rule of obedience. Paul says, that "the law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good," and that he delighted in the law of God: yea, with his mind he served the law of God. Rom. vii. 12, 22, 25.

St. James says, "If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, ye do well," James

ii. 8 ; by which law, that he meant the decalogue, or moral law, he shews in verse 11. " He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar," 1 John iii. 4. " Sin is the transgression of the law." Since then Christ himself is the best expounder of the law, his sermon on the mount bears testimony how largely he confirms and strengthens it. Since faith does not supplant but strengthen the law ; since the Apostles so often press and urge the duties commanded in the law ; since Paul acknowledged that he did serve the law of God in his mind, and that he was " under the law to Christ," 1 Cor. ix. 21. we may warrantably conclude, that the law in substance does still remain a rule of life to the people of God. Still we have other arguments to produce on this momentous subject.

1. If ever the law was a rule of walking, it is still so ; this is clear ; either it is still so, or we must show some time when it was abrogated. But no such period can be specified. Not by Christ or his apostles, therefore not in the time of the gospel.

If Christ, and his apostles, did enjoin the things which the law enjoined, and forbid and condemn the things which the law forbade and condemned, then, doubtless, they did not abro-

gate, but strengthen and confirm the law. "He that breaketh the least of these commandments, and teacheth men so, shall be least in the kingdom of heaven; but he that shall observe and teach them, shall be called, (not a legal preacher,) but great in the kingdom of heaven."

Doubtless, if it had been the intention of our Lord to have abolished the law, he would have made that known, or at least have suffered it to die a natural death, rather than have revived, and vindicated, and purified it from the glosses of the pharisees.

It has been said, the flesh, not the spirit, is in subjection to the law, that that which is unregenerate, is bound to obey, but the regenerate is free, which opinion has opened a dangerous gap to licentiousness, and given loose to such doctrines as those of David George, and the Valentinians.

It has also been said, that the law, though a rule, does not bind us to obedience. If that be so, of what use is it? We would now prove that the law is a binding rule to Christians, as Christians, not as men merely, although the transgression of the commandment, can no more bring condemnation upon the Christian, than his obedience can procure his justification, yet he is bound to leave undone that which is displeasing

to God, and to do that which is pleasing. The apostles used the authority of the law in provoking believers to love and good works. "Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right; honour your father and mother," &c.

If the law of God do not bind the regenerate man to obedience, then that which he does in conformity to the law, is more than his duty, and he will claim the reward due to merit; but the gospel teaches a different lesson. "When you have done all those things which are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants: we have done that which it was our duty to do." Luke xvii. 10.

The law of God has power to say this ought to be done, and that ought not to be done, and thus it binds the conscience of the regenerate man.

Either the law does bind the conscience of Christians to obedience, or they do not sin in the breach of it. We are, however, told that "Sin is the transgression of the law, and where there is no law, there is no transgression.

Again it is said, believers do not sin; being in Christ, they cannot. To advance such an opinion, is of itself a sin, as the apostle shows, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive



ourselves, and the truth is not in us." 1 John i. 8. Nay, farther, "we make him a liar." John, who was a burning and a shining light, said, "*if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves,*" &c. knowing that they (the Apostles) as well as others, sinned, for there is no man which sinneth not. "In many things we offend all."

But, say they, God sees no sin in believers. God does not indeed see sin in the believer to condemn him for it, neither does he approve of, or allow sin in the believer. He will not impute sin to us, if we be in Christ, and in that way, it may be said that God sees it not. Yet God sees all, and brings all to judgment.

Well then, say they, 'God is not displeased at the sin of believers.'

Undoubtedly that which is perfectly good, must evermore hate that which is perfectly evil. Things so opposite can never harmonize. In a wicked man, God hates both the sin and the sinner. In the believer he also hates the sin, but he pities and loves the penitent sinner. In Christ he pardons that which much displeases him.

Paul, we find delighted in the law of God after the inward man; he served the law in his mind. It was his purpose, aim, desire, endeavour of heart to be made conformable to that



law which he called holy, just, and good; it was what he aspired to, yet fell short of. And we also are to endeavour after the same conformity in our mind and actions. "Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently: Oh! that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes! Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto *all* thy commandments." Ps. cxix. 4—6. This is the desire and prayer of every servant of God who would not esteem it freedom, but bondage, to be freed from obeying his holy, just, and righteous law.

It is not freedom, but bondage, to be delivered from that which is holy, just, and good. Conformity, in obedience to the law, is part of our glory, and it is our freedom, therefore, it cannot be our bondage. "That being delivered from the hand of our enemies, we might serve him without fear, in righteousness and holiness all the days of our life." Luke i. 74, 75.

We have said sufficient to disprove the unjust accusation of the Roman Catholics, who charge us with making an exemption from all law, and living as we list, a part of our Christian liberty.

Not one of the reformed churches in the Christian world ever gave cause for such a charge, holding out as they did invariably, the authority and obligation of the moral law as a



rule to which the lives of Christians, are, and must be subject. The Roman Catholics preach obedience in a different way. Their obedience is to justification, and *we* being justified, obey. We make no account of works in opposition to the free grace which justifies, but we make great account of them as the fruits of sanctification. He who does not walk obediently, is yet a stranger to Christ; and he who rests in his obedience, knows not Christ. Indeed many are too like the Jews still. God set up a law for a rule of walking, and they expect justification by it. Like oxen in the yoke, they tug, and toil, and draw, and spend their strength, and when their labour is at an end, they are fatted for slaughter. So these poor men, after having endeavoured hard after their own righteousness, perish in their just condemnation. These unhappy mortals are fitly called by Luther ‘The Devil’s martyrs;’ they suffer much, and take great pains to get to hell at last. The apostle describes their case. “As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” Gal. iii. 10.

Such men as are under the works of the law for justification, are seeking righteousness in

sin, and consequently life in death. And we are all too apt to do this: it is so hard to do all righteousness, and rest in none; difficult to be in duties in respect of performance, and out of duties in respect of dependance. We are too prone to weave our own web of righteousness, and expect to climb into heaven by a thread of our own spinning: else there would be no need for so many admonitions and exhortations to do all righteousness, but rest in none.

Alas! there are too many in the world, who make a Christ of their own works: and here is their undoing, they look for righteousness more in the precept than in the promise, more in the law than in the Gospel; more in working than in believing, and thus they fall. We are all more or less affected in this way, otherwise we should not experience so many ups and downs in our Christian course; depressed when we ought to be comforted, and doubting when we ought to believe; in our weakest performances looking unto Christ, and from ourselves in our strongest.

Our adversaries charge us with making up a false mixture of Christ and Moses; of the law and the Gospel. Of the injustice of this accusation let men of understanding judge. The law is to us no standard in point of justification, but



it is our standard for conduct. The law sends us to the Gospel, that we may be justified, and the Gospel sends us back to the law to learn our duty, being justified. Whatever may be said in contempt of the law, and of those who preach it, it is as we said before, in substance the image of God, a beam of his holiness, from whence fruits of holiness are produced in the lives of his people.

We have a Gospel exhortation which turns us to the obedience of the law. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report—if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Phil. iv. 8. The law is holy, just, and good; it commands nothing but what is excellent; and if we are sent to the industrious ant, and to all the economy of nature, things animate and inanimate, for instruction, how much more to God's written law, the transcript of his own mind, his image in man, and his will to man.

The law and gospel go hand in hand; they help each other, the law being the school-master which brings us to Christ. Gal. iii. 24. The law is subservient to the gospel in convine-

ing and humbling us; and the gospel sends us to the law to frame our conversation. Our obedience is but the expression of our thankfulness to that God who freely justifies—"That being redeemed, we might serve him without fear." Though our service is not the motive or impulse for God to redeem us, yet it is the end of our redemption which the Apostle enlarges upon in the sixth of the Romans; and being freely justified, he makes the application in Romans viii. 12. "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors." Christ having freed us from the penalties, we ought willingly to subject ourselves to the precepts. If he have paid our debt of sin, we surely owe him a debt of service; and we now obey from other principles, by other strength, to other purposes than to what we formerly did. They were principles of obedience, legal, and servile; they are now filial and evangelical. They are principles of faith, love, and joy, they facilitate obedience, and cause the soul to delight therein. The love of Christ constrains, yet is the obedience free.

By union with Christ our works "are wrought in God." John iii. 21. "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Ephes. ii. 10. We are the

servants of God to whom his power, and will, and strength are committed to render him true and laudable service. "The Lord hath vouched thee to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised, and that thou shouldest keep all his commandments." Deut. xxvi. 18.

Again we hear, "that he (God) worketh all our works in us." Isa. xxvi. 12. Our propension was to evil, as naturally as the stones fall downwards, and the sparks fly upwards, but when God works in us to will and to do, our motives are changed, and our great end is to glorify God, and dignify the Gospel in adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour; from whom is our strength, as well as our righteousness. "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." Isa. xlv. 24. Every believer is privileged not only to believe, but to feel confidence in the power and strength which is given to him.

The law is to be preached not in opposition, but in subordination to the Gospel; things must be kept in their right place; it is to take the law out of its place if we use it as our life, for then we trample the blood of Christ underfoot, and make his life and death to be in vain. Let the servant follow his master, Moses Christ; the law grace; obedience faith; and then shall all fulfil their proper and designed purposes.

“ You were redeemed that you might serve,” that is, that you might live to him who died for you. Oh let us beware that the great things which Christ has done for us should not render us careless. Let us beware of abusing his mercy, of frustrating his grace. Grievous ingratitude to abuse the grace of Christ ! To grieve that Holy Spirit whose bowels of mercy would prevail with us ! “ I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”

“ Having such precious promises, let us purge ourselves from all corruption of flesh and spirit.” 2 Cor. vii. 1. None but venomous spirits will spider-like, suck poison from sweets, taking an occasion to sin, from abounding mercy.

It were very sad to be rendered slack and sluggish by that which should quicken and urge us on. Shall any man say in his heart, Christ died, why need I pray ? By Christ I am saved. He has done all, I need do nothing ; not indeed in the way of salvation, for that is done. But is not this a quickening, not a deadening faith ? It should inflame our hearts with love, instead of rendering them cold and insensible. Shall that be a curb, which ought to be a spur ?

**“ Shall we sin that grace may abound ? ”**  
**“ There is mercy with thee,”** says the Psalmist, not that I may sin ; no such liberty is granted, but **“ that thou mayest be feared,”** that is served. **Abundance of mercy calls for abundance of duty.** When the Lord raised up Peter’s wife’s mother from her grievous sickness, her first care was to minister to him, and not to him only, but to the disciples who were with him ; and inasmuch as she did it for one of the least of these, her Lord’s own words certified that she did it for him also.

If God did not abound in mercy towards us, where should we now be ? What would become of us ? By what means should we escape the devouring flames ? O then let us, for God’s sake who gave his son, for Christ’s sake who gave himself ; for faith’s sake, which, without obedience, is a dead faith ; for our profession’s sake, against which we ought not to bring railing accusations, let us abound in duties, let us adorn the doctrine of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by a holy walk and conversation. Being delivered from our enemies by the tender mercy of our God, whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. O



let us “ serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.”

Shall it be said of Christians, that faith cannot do what infidelity can? Shall Turks and Mahometans cast a reproach upon us? Behold, these are the followers of the crucified Jesus; they call themselves by his name, yet they depart from his precepts. Let it not be said of us, that we preach faith, and yet are strangers to obedience. “ Let us no longer walk after the flesh, but after the spirit; let our fruits show whose we are, and whom we serve, for if the spirit of Christ be not in us, we are none of his.” Rom. viii.

“ Receive not the grace of God in vain.” 2 Cor. vi. i. If it be not in vain, we shall prize our gift, and lay it to good account, so that more grace will be given; with the will we shall receive power to walk before the Lord with all humility and thankfulness.

It has been said by some one, ‘ live as though there were no gospel; die as though there were no law; pass the time of your sojourning in this wilderness, as under the conduct of Moses, but look to Joshua alone to bring you safe to Canaan, the promised land.’ Do what you can while you live, but if Christ be not

**your only support and stay; if he be not your light and your guide, through the valley of the shadow of death, you must stumble upon the dark mountains, and you shall find no deliverer.**

## CHAPTER IX.

*The purpose for which the law was given.*

Now let us examine into the purposes for which the law was given. 1. It serves as a rule for the godly ; 2. as condemnation to the ungodly. To the first it discovers sin, it humbles them, and causes them to fly to Christ, in whom is mercy to cover, and grace to pardon all transgression. To the wicked it is a restraint ; they dare not let loose all their lawless passions, before whom its terrors are displayed. The indignation, the wrath of an angry God ; “ tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil.” Rom. ii. 8, 9.

The law has no power to change sinners, but it can restrain them. Before the law was given, sin had a more perfect reign, by reason of the darkness of men’s understanding, and the security of their hearts. Still, however, it may be said to reign, for restraining grace does not conquer, though it controls. If God had not

denounced terrible vengeance against sin, it would have known no bounds. It would not have reigned, but raged in the sons of men. As ferocious beasts, lions, tigers, and bears, must be chained, so must men be subject to the law's restraint, else the father of lies, their master, will drive them on until they do all that is in their hearts to do, they will fulfil all wickedness. If there were no such restraint the tares would choke the wheat; God's people could not live in the Devil's kingdom. Every man would be a Cain to his brother, an Ammon to his sister, an Absalom to his father, a Saul to himself, a Judas to his master, for all hearts are alike desperately wicked. In its natural state, sin has neither sense nor shame; it knows no why, no wherefore; it acknowledges neither bank nor bound; it is a free current, a rapid stream. Have we not therefore reason to bless God for the bounds which he has set to iniquity? For that powerful mandate which is issued, "Hitherto shalt thou go, but no further?" Were it not for sovereign goodness and mercy, there would be no place of safety in all this howling wilderness. Fields, streets, woods, forests, nay even our houses and beds would be filled with blood, and murder, and rapine, and all the long list of nameless crimes of lawless man. Happy then

is it, that he who sets bounds to the raging sea, and confines the overflowing element with strong banks, also restrains the lusts and affections of sinful man. The last work is as difficult as the first, and as much requires sovereign power and strength.

The law is given to discover sin, and to awaken the conscience of those to whom it came after the promise. If they had not known the transgression, they could not have seen the necessity of the promise. In giving the law, God pursued his own purpose of mercy, by making "the gospel worthy of all acceptance," that when convinced of sin, we might prize a Saviour; that when stung with the fiery serpent in the wilderness, we might look up to the brazen serpent on the pole. And in this God did but pursue his own purpose of grace.

The law was given to humble man for sin. "Now we know that what things the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Rom. iii. 19, 20. We were no less guilty before, but the law was necessary to make our guilt manifest. "Where there is no

law, there is no transgression," that doth appear, sin must be discovered to us ; our conscience must be charged with it, before we are humbled under it.

" Until the law, sin was in the world ; but sin is not imputed where there is no law. Nevertheless death *reigned* from Adam to Moses." Rom. v. 13, 14.

Sin and death reigned in a dark region over all the sons of men. Secure and careless, they imputed no sin to themselves, as it is said, " Sin is not imputed where there is no law." The law in its terrors must discover to man his sinfulness, before he can fully appreciate the immensity of his obligation to that grace which cancelled his debt.

When convinced of sin, we groan under it as an intolerable burden. Our past transgressions stand in frightful array before us. We dread the wrath of a justly offended God—a horrible gulph seems to yawn before us, and our unbelieving fears bring torment : but when the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus bursts upon our view, then all is changed ; then we see our God is not an angry Judge, but a reconciled Father in Christ, who himself devised the way for our escape : then we find peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, and acknowledge the unmerited grace which *frankly* forgave us all.

**This is the reason why the thunderings of Mount Sinai threaten. We are accused, condemned, sentenced : but God cannot be contrary to himself. The decree is gone forth, he will never reverse it, we are redeemed from the curse of the law, but our guilt is made evident, that our mouths may be stopped, and falling down we may acknowledge the riches and grace of pardoning mercy. "The scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe."**

**When we are truly humbled from the sense of sin, we are brought out of self, and into Christ, as the defiled to a fountain which cleanses, as sick and weak, wounded and bruised, to the only remedy which can heal.**

**Grace does what the law cannot. The law may stop the stream, but it cannot purify its source; it may chain the wolf, but cannot change the wolfish nature; it may restrain practices, but it cannot give new principles, all which is the work of grace; which though it does not alter the nature of sin, saves us from its fruits, and condemnation.**

## CHAPTER X.

*Is the law then against the promises? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.—GAL. iii. 21, 22.*

THE law is here found to be subservient to the promise, in that it concludes *all* under sin. To those who are convinced of sin, and humbled, the promise is given. The law is the school-master which lashes us, and drives us to Christ for refuge. If it be the ceremonial law, then is the moral law the rod, which may be said to have driven us to the ceremonial law, which was Christ typified. Morning and evening the offering of the lamb was of itself a simple representation of the blood of atonement, as the same means is now used to drive us to Christ in truth.

The law then remains an instrument in the hands of the Holy Spirit, who takes of the things of Christ and shews them unto us.



If the avenger of blood had not pursued the murderer, he would never have flown to the city of refuge. We make no account of Christ until the Holy Spirit humbles us under a sense of sin. Like Paul we must be cast upon the ground, and the scales must fall from our eyes before we can see Christ in all his glory. The Lord opened the eyes of the blind, the Lord raised up him that was bowed down, and being made righteous in Christ, the Lord loved him who had been his persecutor. Psalm cxlvi. 8.

God gave the law after the promise, to enhance his gift. When the law comes upon us, as it did to Paul, with a convincing, accusing, humbling, killing power; oh then we find the preciousness of the promise, the preciousness of salvation, the preciousness of the blood of Jesus. Man had never known the sweetness of Christ, if he had not tasted the bitterness of sin.

Though we be adopted into the family of God, and are made willing in the day of his power to serve him: though we are sons, and are guided by his Spirit, and in the love of him are ready to yield glad obedience, yet still we must learn,—as children we must sit in the school of Christ, we must keep our eyes fixed upon our Master, whose eye is always upon us; his word must be a light to our feet and a lantern to our

paths ; thus have we a rule of walking in Christ, who is the way, and the light to guide us on the way. The law must be our rule in Christ, and by the strength of Christ we must obey.

The law shews us what is holy, but cannot make us holy. If the law be a principle within us, we take it for our outward rule or pattern. We are not made holy by imitation, but by implantation.

The law remains to us as a glass, in which we cannot look without discovering a fearful view of imperfections, which view brings down our high imaginations, and causes us to “ fly for refuge to the hope set before us,” the “ anchor of our soul sure and stedfast.” Thus is the law made subservient to grace.

## CHAPTER XI.

*The two covenants of works and grace.*

MANY passages of scripture shew that to the Jewish people the law was a covenant of works. “Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself. Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then shall ye be a peculiar treasure unto me, above all people : for all the earth is mine ; and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.” *Exod. xix. 4—6. Deut. iv. 13.* A covenant of works could not stand, therefore God made a new covenant with his people. “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah ; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt ; which my covenant they brake, though I was



an husband unto them, saith the Lord. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people: for they shall all know me, from the least, unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Jer. xxxi. 31—34.

Here is a renewal of that promise made to Adam after his fall: "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." And again to Abraham: In whose seed "all the nations of the earth shall be blessed."

The new and "better covenant, was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second." Heb. viii. 6, 7, 10.

The first covenant was made with man in his sinless state; the second after the fall, is said to have been legally dispensed to the Jews, and consequently a repetition of the covenant of works. The clearer manifestation of the Gospel shews what it truly is, a covenant of grace: for how can that be called a covenant of works whereby a holy God is married to an unholy

people? How can that be called a covenant of works which shewed mercy to sinful man? If works were required, then would grace be overthrown. Then would the covenant and the promise contradict each other. But that cannot be, God being an unchangeable God. He is always the same in his purpose and grace to sinners. This covenant was established by an oath. "By the blood of the covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit. Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee." Zech. ix. 11, 12. "God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." Heb. vi. 17, 18.

If it were the determined purpose of God to give life and salvation to the lost sons of men, it is of grace, not of works. "To Abraham and his seed were the promises made.—And to thy seed, which is Christ. The covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise



of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise. Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made." Gal. iii. 16—19.

"If the law be a covenant of works, then were the Jews under a different covenant from ours, and all are lost, but so, says not the Apostle. "We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they." Acts xv. 11. God never appointed any means unnecessary, or unsuitable to his purpose which is to give life and salvation. The law could not do it, as is seen in Rom. viii. 3, and Gal. iii. 21.

God is love, and therefore it never entered into his heart to give hard conditions to weak sinners. A dead man cannot walk; after his fall he could do nothing, therefore the covenant of works was made null and void. Besides the inequality is contrary to the nature of a covenant, for how can the impotent enter into conditions with the strong?

A man may enter into covenant with his friend, giving and taking in return, but he would not do so with an enemy. We, as guilty condemned sinners, became the enemies of God and have nothing to give him in return for his covenant of grace, which brings us reconciliation,

pardon and peace. We receive *all*, but have nothing to give. There is nothing of man's bringing; it is all of God's bestowing. If in the purchase of a kingdom, we give but one penny, then is the kingdom paid for, it is not a free gift; but ours is free, unconditional. This is what comforts the soul, the covenant of works terrifies the conscience, its object is man asleep, or rather dead in trespasses and sins. Grace awakes and humbles him for sin. The one shows the way of service without strength or power to work; the other in shewing the way, gives strength to the weak, &c.

The one is called old because those administrations did now, wax old, and decay: they were ready to disappear; were nigh unto vanishing that they might give place to new, and more excellent administrations. The first were obscurely administered; they were clouded and darkened with shadows. The second was unclouded and perspicuous. The one was a grievous burden, the other light, easy, delightful. The first did beget to bondage, the second to the adoption and freedom of sons.

“The law having a shadow of good things to come,” Heb. viii. 5. gave but a faint and clouded glimpse of that covenant of grace which, like the sun in the firmament, cleared away the misty

veil; from Adam to Moses all was dark and obscure, from the time of Moses to the prophets the morning dawned: when John began his ministry, the light increased; and being the path of the Just One, the Sun of Righteousness, it shone brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. Under the ministry of Christ, the counsels of his Father were revealed in the glorious manifestation of the redemption of his people. After Christ's resurrection, the book which had been sealed was fully opened, that he who runs may read.

There is a saying of Jerome, 'Cursed is he that saith, God commandeth impossibilities; and cursed is he that saith the law is possible.' How can we reconcile such a seeming contradiction? God commanded the law, is it then impossible to fulfil it? God did not expect we should fulfil it; but when he said, "Do this and live," he wished to discover to us our inability, at the same time giving us faith to look unto Christ, who hath fulfilled all righteousness for us. He, having in his own body, borne the penalties, obeyed the precepts, took upon himself the curse, and performed our services: thus he "magnified the law and made it honourable." Thus the Lord is "well pleased for *his* righteousness sake." When the young man came to Jesus and said, "Good



master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" our Lord did not answer him by saying, 'If thou wilt enter into life *believe*, have faith in the Son of God, but he said, "If thou wilt enter into life keep the commandments." Our Lord, to whom all things are open and known, was well acquainted with the pharisaical boasting which swelled the heart of this proud justiciary, even before he declared that from his youth he had kept all the commandments. But on our Lord's probing him farther, he discovered his deficiency, and went away sorrowful. And this is often the means he takes, when men will be their own saviours, and look for righteousness by the law, he bids them go and keep the commandments; he holds up that mirror to shew them their deformities, and when broken and humbled at the horrible view, instead of threatening, he encourages and comforts them with rich promises of free grace. Then he invites them to lay their burden down, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest; "The spirit of the Lord is upon me to preach liberty to the captive." &c.

It is a task as difficult as to force the sun from the sky, to turn men from seeking justification by their obedience to the law; it is their great error

and mistake. "They have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."

They went about to establish their own righteousness, but could never attain to it; they might as easily set a dead man on his legs. It is doing, what is too often done when the blind attempt to lead the blind, to call the unawakened to do this, that, and the other. We bid them pray; we exhort them to perform duties, &c., which they do, poor ignorant souls, trusting in them for justification; and they mistakingly apparel themselves in the filthy shreds and tatters of their own righteousness, thinking thereby to attain life everlasting. When sick, they are their own physicians; when wounded, they apply the salve of their own duties, and try to purify themselves in the polluted stream of their own performances, while they entirely look away from, and neglect the great salvation, the "Fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness." Zech. xiii. 1. "Lord, I will make mention of thy righteousness only," "For that no flesh should glory in his presence." "Christ is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification,

and redemption." 1 Cor. i. 30. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." When the Lord promised the heritage to his servants he added, "And their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord." Isaiah liv. 17. Righteousness is part of the armour of the Lord, it is the breast-plate which he puts upon his saints.

What we have now said, is to prove that there was no end, or use for which the law was given that does not consist with grace, and which was not serviceable to the advancement of the covenant of grace.



## CHAPTER XII.

*Believers are not exempt from temporal punishments for sin.*

OUR next inquiry shall be, whether any part of freedom by Christ, exempts us from temporal punishments and chastisements for sin. The Scriptures must be our guide here also, as they only are infallible.

It is true that all the sins of the people of God are absolutely and freely pardoned ;— they are cast into the depths of the sea ; blotted out as a thick cloud, which, having rolled away, can appear again no more for ever. We have God's own word, “ I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. Put me in remembrance : let us plead together ; declare thou, that thou mayest be justified.” Isaiah xlii. 25, 26. Yet still the rod of correction is necessary. If we are children we must bear the chastisement of a Father ; for what son is there whom the Father chasteneth not ? To this truth

we have the testimony of Abraham, David, Moses, Solomon, Jeremiah, &c. &c., as well as of the Apostle, "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, - nor faint when thou art rebuked of him, for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Heb. xii. 5-8, &c. Prov. iii. 11, 12. Job v. 17.

That these chastisements are for sin, we also have Scripture proofs, "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins." Lam. iii. 39. If chastisement were not necessary it would never be inflicted. "For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." If they forsake his laws, and walk not in his judgments; if they break his statutes, and keep not his commandments; his own assurance follows—"then will I visit their transgressions with a rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven." Psalm lxxxix.

30—37. This is said of the seed of David, the Church of Christ. "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him ; until he plead my cause." Micah vii. 9. Happy is the man whom God correcteth. For he maketh sore, and bindeth up : he woundeth, and his hands make whole." Job v. 17, 18. The people of God are required to humble themselves under his mighty hand : to acknowledge the justness of his judgments, to repent in dust and ashes, that He may lift them up. Then is he mindful of his covenant which he made to a thousand generations. Then He lifts up the hands which hang down, and He strengthens the feeble knees, He speaks peace to the troubled soul, and revives the spirit of the humble, and the heart of the contrite ones : for saith the Lord, "I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wrath ; for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made. For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him : I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him : I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him." Isaiah lvii. 15—18. It is not the wrath of an angry judge which is here described, but that of a Father, whose "justice lingers into love."

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It has been said that God does not afflict his own people, his chosen ones for sin : surely Moses and Aaron were among the number of his elect, and God would not suffer them to conduct the children of Israel, nor to enter themselves into the land of promise because they sanctified him not. Numb. xx. 12. They did not give to him the glory due unto his holy name, which was a great sin, and for which they were greatly punished. David was dear to God, the man after his own heart, yet David was sorely afflicted by reason of his sins. The wrath of God lay heavy upon him, in the death of one child, the rebellion of another, and, according to the word of the Lord, the sword never departed from his house. 2 Sam. xii. 10. He was evil entreated, he was despitefully used, but he bore the chastisement without a murmur, or rather with such entire resignation that he would not have it otherwise than the Lord decreed, " And the king said unto Zadok, carry back the ark of God into the city : if I shall find favor in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and shew me both it, and his habitation : but if he thus say, I have no delight in thee ; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him." 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26. And again, when assailed by the curses

of Shemei. "Let him alone and let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him."

Many dear and chosen people of God, who were not only under, but in the covenant of grace, have indeed been afflicted and chastened for sin, and have had reason to say, "I had great bitterness, but thou hast, in love to my soul, delivered it from the pit of corruption, for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back." Isaiah xxxviii. 17.

There is a sweet accordance and harmony between the Old and New Testament; God is the same in both; had we true spiritual discernment we should discover how perfectly they agree, even in those places which appear most contradictory.

The apostle Paul tells the Corinthians that because of their profanation of the table of the Lord, many among them were sick and weak, and many had fallen asleep. 1 Cor. xi. But it may be objected, this was addressed to unworthy partakers which God's people could not be. There is a two-fold unworthiness: first, of the person: secondly, of the present temper of mind.

The unworthiness of the person is described by the man who comes in without the wedding garment, unjustified, unsanctified, which can never be the case with the people of God, chosen and accepted in the beloved. But in their tem-



per of mind, in the manner of their partaking of the ordinance, they may be unworthy. To such the apostle speaks. "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat," &c. To illustrate this further, let us take the prayer of Hezekiah, "The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary." 1 Chron. xxx. 18, 19. Their hearts were prepared to seek God, they had an habitual, but not an actual preparation.

That St. Paul addressed the people of God may be seen, from his calling them brethren, and telling them why they were chastened of the Lord, viz. that they "should not be condemned with the world." They are not properly punished, but chastened—not as sinners, but as sons. "Judgment must begin at the house of God." 1 Peter iv. 17. God calls his people to repentance, lest some judgment overtake them. The Spirit of God bore witness to the work, and labour, and patience of the church of Ephesus; and how, for his name's sake, they had laboured and not fainted. Yet he had something to say against them, because they had left their first love; therefore he calls upon them to repent, "Remember, therefore, from whence thou art

fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent." "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." Rev. ii. 7. Again, the same testimony is borne to the angel of the church of Pergamus, that "even where Satan's seat is, they held fast his name, and denied not his faith," who held the sharp sword with two edges, with which they were threatened if they did not repent of those things which God had against them. "Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly."

In the tenth chapter, first Corinthians, we read of the calamities which sin brought upon those who were highly favoured of God, whom God led forth in the wilderness, by a pillar of a cloud by day, and fire by night; who "did all eat the same spiritual meat, and drank the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ." Who, notwithstanding their grievous rebellions and idolatries, were not forsaken. "Yea, when they had made them a molten calf, and said, This is thy God that brought thee up out of Egypt, and had wrought great provocations; yet thou in thy manifold mercies

forsakest them not in the wilderness : the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way : neither the pillar of fire by night, to show them light, and the way wherein they should go." Neh. ix. 18, 19. Yet they departed from that way, and turned from that light, and brought upon themselves the sore displeasure of God, whose judgments overtook them for examples to them, and admonitions to us, that if we partake of their sins, we must also partake of their strokes.

But this, it has been said, is not to punish the sinner : it is rather the medicine of a good Physician to effect the cure of a distemper. The medicine, however, does little, if it afford but a temporary relief : it must go to the root of the malady and extract it altogether. But can this be done ? No. While the body exists it will be subject to disease which medicine may subdue, but cannot destroy. If there were no disease, there would be no need of medicine : if there were no sin, there would be no need of affliction, which is its consequent result. Affliction is not the cause, but the consequence of sin.

Hezekiah gloried in the riches of his treasures, in the strength of his arms, and the prosperity of his dominion, of all which, he made a

proud display to the Ambassador of Babylon, on account of which, the Prophet Isaiah was sent to apprise him, that he had not only tempted God, but his enemy also, who should come from Babylon and possess himself of all he had seen.

Hezekiah's sin was not the procuring cause of the calamity decreed beforehand, but God took occasion from his sin to declare what was about to happen. Is. xxxix.

David sinned by numbering the people, and God took occasion from thence to pronounce the judgment of the pestilence which was to follow. To the numbering of the people, which of itself was the transgression of the commandment, the omission of a duty was added. A ransom for every soul that was so numbered ought to have been offered: "that there be no plague among them when thou numberest them." Ex. xxx. 12.

David's sin gave the occasion, but Israel's sin was the procuring cause of the pestilence.

Sin is the cause of punishment, which is the effect: take away the cause, and the effect will be removed. When the body is taken away, its shadow will also vanish. When sin is pardoned, guilt is removed with its effects. "Evil shall slay the wicked," but no evil can happen

to those whose iniquities Christ has cancelled. They are freed from spiritual, temporal, or eternal punishment, as parts of the curse for sin.

They are freed from making any offering for sin to satisfy the justice of God. Fatherly mercy they are not freed from, but vindictive justice they are. God has thoughts of love in all that he does to his people. The ground of all his dealing is love; the manner of his dealing is love; and the end of his dealing is love: all directed to make us partakers of his holiness here, and of his glory hereafter.

Christ having borne the punishment of our sins and fully satisfied divine justice, nothing more can be required; for God would not, nor could not justly accept full payment from Christ, and then demand something more from us. This is not the way, therefore, in which our heavenly Father chastens us, it is not in any way relating to himself, but in regard to our own benefit, that we may mourn in a godly sort, and be warned to sin no more, lest a worst thing come upon us. Christ, for us, having endured *all* the wrath of the Father, His love only remains to us. The dark and deadly shower fell with its heaviest drops upon his devoted head, while upon us descends a sunshine dew, with kindly warmth and moisture, to soften the hard

soil of our hearts and cause them to bring forth fruits of holiness.

Christ drank to the dregs that bitter cup which would have consigned us to eternal condemnation, and left for us instead a salutary medicine—chastisement instead of punishment, correction instead of a sentence.

St. Augustin notices three reasons for the chastisement of sin in the believer :—1. For the demonstration of the misery justly due to us ; for the amendment of our lives ; for the exercise of our patience.

It may also be permitted, for the terror of the wicked, that in beholding the sufferings of the saints they may be warned of their own destiny. If it be thus done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry ? If it thus befall with the sheep of Christ, what shall become of wolves and of goats ? If judgment begin at the house of God, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God ? “If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear.” 1 Pet. iv. 17, 18. In the manifestation of his justice, God spares not his own in the chastisement of sin ; otherwise the ungodly might accuse him of partiality ; it also serves to remove the scandal which the sins of the saints bring upon their religion. God was more dishonored by David’s dereliction

tion, than by all the abominations of Sodom. As the prophet told him, the ways of God were blasphemed thereby; for which reason the sin which he secretly committed, should be punished "before all Israel, and before the sun." 1 Sam. xii. 12.

The woes of others should be our warnings: their sufferings our standing sermons. The power of God stops the overflowing current of sin. We are charged to remember Lot's wife who was turned into a pillar of salt.

God's house of correction is his school of instruction. Even His own chosen ones have unsubdued hearts, and ears dull of hearing. They too often slumber and sleep: therefore they must be roused; they must be humbled: their ears must be opened by discipline. Men who have felt the sting of the serpent by being afflicted for sin, will beware of its venomous spawn: they will avoid, if they can, further pollution.

Before the Babylonian captivity, the children of Israel were continually falling into idolatry, to such excess, as if they thought the whole creation could scarcely contain their idols, or that there were creatures enough to make idols of. But when God carried them captive into Babylon, and caused them to suffer severely for this crime, they utterly forsook idolatry; and to

this present day the Jews have never returned to it, but abhor the semblance of created things: they will not even look at a picture but with detestation. "When thy judgements are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness."

The sufferings of the saints here, sweeten their future enjoyments.

The philosopher Zeno sought out torment to prepare him for tasting pleasure, and said that pleasures were nothing worth, if not thus seasoned. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

The people of God are often called upon to glorify him "*in the fires.*" Is. xxiv. 15. The finest earthen vessels are sometimes put seven times into the furnace before their polish is pronounced sufficiently beautiful. The Lord's own word is, "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." Is. xlviii. 10. It is, however, very different from "the burning fiery furnace" to which the wicked are condemned. The tares are burned, but the wheat is preserved: while the flame slays the one, it will pass over the other "without singeing an hair of their head. While walking in the midst of the fire, they shall receive no hurt," the Son of God is with them.



**Dan. iii. 25.** Though they fall bound into the furnace, they shall come out at liberty : their cords shall be consumed ; their snare shall be broken, and they shall escape. They have the sure promise of God, " When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee : when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour." **Is. xliii. 2.** And their torment will be irremediable and unremitting. Far different is the just condemnation of the wicked, who in that day that they shall be severed from the just, shall be cast into the furnace of fire ; " there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." **Mat. xiii. 50.**

All affliction, all evil proceeds from sin ; for as " the ways of Wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace," so, the ways of wickedness are ways of evil, and all her paths trouble. God has graciously given his commandments for our peace and security, and as often as we break the bounds which He has prescribed, consternation and trouble must ensue. God has ordained it so, the consequence of sin must naturally bring evil.

As the heart of man is the birth-place of

every corrupt imagination, so is he "born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." No evil, no trouble comes by chance : all, and every thing which can happen is either by Divine appointment or permission. "Affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground." Not a hair can fall from our head without a Providence ; and surely if the smaller things are thus ordered, so are the greater. The evil and the good are providentially ordained, or providentially permitted. By denying this, we deny the sovereignty of God, and otherwise falsify His own word—"I form the light, and create the darkness : I make peace, and create evil : I the Lord do all these." Is. xlv. 7. "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" Amos iii. 6. The punishment of sin is the evil which God fore-ordained and created ; but sin itself is the offspring of its own author the Devil. "Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? Did not the Lord, He against whom we have sinned?" By His divine dispensation evil hunts the ungodly to his own destruction—some droppings of displeasure precede the thickening shower of his vengeance.

' His wakened anger slowly moves,  
His willing mercy flies apace.'

When the people of God abuse his mercy, when they fall into sin, even then He makes all things to work together for their good. Though they fall they shall rise, and by their fall they shall learn their weak and dependent state ; they learn to distrust themselves, while they seek strength from Him who excelleth in might, as he does in mercy. Thus the Lord brings good out of evil, and with a Father's hand corrects those whom he dearly loves, and to whom every frowning dispensation of his providence bears a message of love : though it is love abused, love offended ; and although it may cause heaviness to endure for a night, it will bring joy in the morning.

But although from sin originates every species of sorrow and chastisement, yet it is not always the procuring cause of affliction to the people of God, who are often thereby turned from some wrong course, as in the case of St. Paul, or as in that of Job, as an exercise of faith and patience, or, as in the whole army of Martyrs, that the truth may be thus testified. We are often brought to see the effects of sin in its punishment, which we would not see in its cause. What we would not be taught from God's word, we are forced to learn from his work. "A rod is for the back of a fool."

All these are, however, working together for good—all subservient to the merciful purpose of God towards his elect, whose sufferings are but for the present time, and not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed hereafter. These are they who have received the spirit of adoption whereby they cry Abba, Father; who are not bond-men, but children of God, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, who in partaking of his sufferings shall also partake of his glory.

## CHAPTER XIII.

*Fruits of holiness must appear in the regenerate to the praise and glory of God. Prayer is their privilege. In waiting upon God they are blessed, and find his service perfect freedom.*

WE, who were dead, being quickened by his Spirit, which dwelleth in us, are called upon to serve without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our lives. Being freed from the power of sin, we are no longer to serve sin. "We are not debtors to the flesh, to live after the flesh, but to the Spirit, to live after the Spirit." "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made us free from the law of sin and death." Here is the word of truth not to be cavilled at—not to be disputed: it is a record from on high, written as with a sunbeam. The light which surrounds that glorious orb of day may as easily be extinguished as to separate holiness and obedience from Christ's redeemed people, who dwell in him,

and he in them—who are one with him, and he with them. The grace of God which bringeth salvation, is also the means by which we are taught to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and that we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.

Some think that they have nothing to do in the service of God, unless moved to it by his Spirit. It is a call certainly, which none should neglect. When the wind blows, they should spread their sails. When He standeth, and knocketh at the door of their hearts, they should quickly open unto him. Like as when David heard the noise in the mulberry trees, he should go out, for God was gone out before him. Many, from a natural averseness to engage in any good works, go on from day to day in listless idleness, and thus resist the Spirit, and quench the Spirit; for, when we are not well employed, we are ill employed—when we are not serving God, we are serving his enemy and our own.

But even here, many have erred and perplexed themselves, by thinking they should obey every incitement, whether in season or out of season, lest they should reject or quench some call of the Holy Spirit. Satan is very watchful for opportunities to deceive and perplex the souls which he cannot destroy; therefore, we should be

on our guard lest the duty proposed be not of his instigation, instead of the Holy Spirit of God, by which, when moved to do any thing, the power is given for the performance.

Some of Satan's opportunities are, when our spirits are depressed with divers temptations and troubles, to tempt us farther in the way of duty to be done, or left undone. He deals with us as the Babylonians did with the Israelites when their hearts were in heaviness, by reason of their captivity; then required they of them a song. "Come now sing us one of the songs of Zion." But how, indeed, could they sing the Lord's song in a strange land? How could they sing the joyful song of deliverance while still groaning under captivity? No more can we: Satan's suggestions may urge us on to despair, but can never lighten our load. When disturbed in mind, he tells us we ought to pray, and because we cannot pray, he persuades us that we do not believe; he blindfolds, and then bids us see; he hardens, then bids us feel; and after having made us like the troubled sea, which casts up nothing but mire and dirt, there he leaves us to wallow: when distracted with fears and unbelief, while the storm rages within, he leaves us, tossed, confounded and nigh to destruction; but we are

rescued—He who bid the storm to cease, comes forward to our relief.

Satan exacts hard duties. He tells us that natural things must give way to spiritual; that we must not spend our nights in sleep, but at prayer; that we must starve the body to feed the mind; and by not complying with such unreasonable demands, he persuades us that we have resisted and quenched the motion of the Holy Spirit.

God, however, requires not these things at our hands, and in such temptations we may say with a godly man of old, when thus called to pray when he wished to sleep, ‘Get thee hence, Satan, I will go to duty when God calls, not when thou suggestest. I have committed my soul into the arms of Christ, where I now rest and sleep.’

When Satan puts us upon a duty, it is when we are weak in body, and unable to do it, or when our mind is disinclined to the work, knowing well that if we perform it, then it will be to his advantage—the work being that of nature, not of grace. He seizes the moment when we are weakest to make us move the heaviest logs.

He also puts us upon a duty when he thinks it will prove a snare; he moves us to it as a scruple, and farther impels us on to perform the



duty, not to comfort, but to torment and vex us, not to raise us up when dejected, but to cast us down lower, even to the ground ; but often his malicious purposes are defeated when a stronger than he comes forward to our rescue.

The Spirit of God moves and stirs up our hearts to duty in a different way. The call of God is an effectual call to work while the day lasts. He himself works in us ; His is the strength and the power. Nature's weakness has nothing to do with it. Yet, are we not liable to feel this weakness, this natural disinclination to do the Lord's work ? Yes, and ever shall, while the warfare is to be carried on between the flesh and the spirit. We are therefore to watch and pray lest we enter into temptation ; we are to look unto Jesus in all we do, that we may glorify God by a holy walk and conversation. " If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." Gal. v. 25.

We should be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord with alacrity when moved to it, and when not aware of such sensible call, not giving way to dullness on that account, but rather to seek and sigh after that grace which holds converse with God daily. " The wind blows where it listeth," &c. Though the regenerated spirit may not be able always to discern the wafting

of that breeze which is in continual operation in its quickening influence, yet they should be found in the way of duty: averseness from it should not keep them back. If they always wait until they think they are called to a duty, then they have good reason to suspect their motives; they are, in such cases, generally of the flesh, which we are not to obey, but to walk after the Spirit. God esteems that which is wrested out of the hands of the flesh. If we never seek after God, in prayer and other ways, but when sensibly moved to it, we deprive ourselves of much communion with him. How often have we knelt down in a cold, lifeless frame, and, in waiting upon him, have been quickened and animated! How often, when dejected and straitened, so that we felt as if we had no power so much as to breathe one sigh, or lift up one supplication, has our heart been enlarged, and, in pouring it out before the Lord, we have risen comforted and strengthened! Often, when we have had no heart to pray, the Spirit has helped our infirmities, and stooped to us in our weakness, and revealed himself to us in the sweetest assurances. Thus they are pronounced blessed who wait on the Lord.

God meets those who are found in his ways,

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We are very willing to wait for temporal advantages. The miller spreads his sails, and, ready prepared, waits for the wind which he cannot command. The impotent man waited thirty-eight years, for the moving of the waters ; many grievous disappointments did not force him to turn away his longing eyes from the healing stream : he waited long, but did not wait in vain ; his pitiful case drew towards him the Helper of the helpless ; and in the strength instantaneously imparted, he arose, took up his bed and walked. Let us do likewise ; let us, though we cannot command the Spirit of grace to come and dwell with us, wait , and long for his coming. Thus we see the face of God : He reveals himself to us, he holds communion with us ; out of his fulness he supplies our wants ; the world is cast out and sin kept down ; faith is in action, and grace in exercise.

David was sweetly repaid for his patient waiting. He says, " I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God." This is every believer's experience when he feels himself set upon *the Rock*, which is Christ. He

is indeed brought out of an horrible pit and miry clay ; and, instead of sighs and groans, may well sing the new song of praise. It does not appear that David's prayer was immediately answered ; therefore he waited patiently, and God inclined to him, and let him know that he heard his cry by the great deliverance which he wrought out for his waiting servant.

Some there are who think that their whole occupation should be prayer, that they should be ever on their knees, and be turning that, which ought to be a privilege, to a penance. Blind and ignorant are they, who think that they can thus purchase the favour of God—that they can scale heaven by such a ladder—that they can purchase pardon by such means. Vain repetitions will never move the mercy of God : they are an abomination unto *Him* who has devised other means to save the soul alive. This is nature's acting, grace has nothing to do with it. Prayer is not to be resorted to as a duty commanded, but as a favour granted. We cannot give or do anything for God in praying to him. If a starving beggar ask for food, he does not confer a favour upon us, though he ask one from us. He has reason to be thankful that he is permitted to speak of his wants to one who is willing to relieve them.

Access to God, and communion with him, is the Christian's highest privilege, and such he should ever esteem it, with a longing desire to approach God more and more. A Christian loves God, not because he is commanded to love him, but because he sees so much beauty and loveliness in him.

Duty is no burden, no toilsome task to him whose heart the love of God has warmed: he is no day-labourer, working for wages—he loves his Master's work, and seeks no reward; to be employed, is his reward. There is no slavery in such services—they are free—they are pleasant. To be denied employment is the greatest punishment to those on whose hearts God has written his laws, and made it their delight to do his will. These are they whom he has made willing in the day of his power. (Ps. xl. 8. Jer. xxxi. 33. Ez. xxxvi. 26, 27. Heb. viii. 10, &c.) They have no power to will or to do, to whom God has not given it.

The unregenerate do nothing but from fear of punishment: all such fear is cast out of the regenerate by perfect love.

When Absalom was recalled to Jerusalem, yet still not permitted to appear in his father's presence, he shewed a child-like spirit, when he said, "Let me see his face, though he kill me." To

be denied access and communion with God, is the Christian's greatest misery—to be permitted to approach him, his greatest happiness. "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee." Ps. lxxv. 4.

Communion with God, to the believer, is heaven below. It is what he aspires to, what he pants after. "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God : when shall I come and appear before God." Ps. xlii. 1, 2. Communion with God is more to him than his necessary food—he longs for it, and without it can feel no gladness—it is the spring of his joy—the delight and glory of his soul. It is the Holy Spirit's call, "Seek ye my face," and the heart's answer, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek."

Far different is this true spirit of liberty from that which the men of the world call liberty, they burden themselves with duties as a propitiatory sacrifice. "They ask, but they have not, because they ask amiss." They pray, but they do not find God in their prayer—their hearts being closed against him. They do duty as a duty ; therefore it is tedious and burdensome. These are convinced, not converted men : and conviction without conversion brings the

terrors of the law before the mind, but teaches neither hatred of sin, nor love of duty. Like the way-mark to the traveller, it points out the line of duty, but does not stir a step to help him forward. Grace in the soul is as the pilot to the ship—it steers him on in the course which it prescribes. Conviction looks for satisfaction in the duty by the duty, conversion looks from the duty to Christ.

The one goes to duty to find enjoyment, the other hopes to silence the voice of conscience and to live by what he does ; the converted man looks beyond all that he does or can do to Christ, and says, “ I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me.” In Christ is all his dependance, not the prayers he has offered up, nor the tears he has shed.

Coldness and formality are characteristics of the one—fervency and zeal, of the other ; yet not always : the godly man has his seasons of coldness and apathy, as the ungodly of terrifying convictions, by which he is sometimes moved to pray as Ahab did. Baal’s priest’s called loudly and earnestly to their idol ; so does the natural man pray to God, when the pangs of conscience bring horror and dread to his mind : he prays in fear, not in faith ; his cry is of the flesh, not the Spirit. When the Spirit prays in

the heart of man, it is "with groanings which cannot be uttered." And again, it is the pouring out of the Spirit of grace and supplication—the wrestling, importunate cry : " I will not let thee go unless thou bless me." It is the prayer of faith sent from God, and which again ascends to God.

All that the worldly man does, and all that he parts with, is in subservience to the same end. As the merchant, hoping to save his vessel, and himself in it, casts away his merchandize ; yet in so doing, casts away his heart's treasure ; so does this man set himself to duties and to mortify lusts, as so many hard tasks and grievous burdens which he must submit to as a hard condition whereby alone he can be saved. Weeping he parts with each sin, as Jacob forced himself from Benjamin to avoid starvation—he persuades himself that he can endure that which he naturally loathes, if heaven is to be his reward

The Christian, on the contrary, looks upon sin as his poison—that accursed thing which his soul abhors, and which he longs and desires to part with : holiness is his happiness—it is the object which he keeps in view, and eagerly desires—it is manna to his mouth, health to his soul, as a new-born babe he desires to be fed with the sincere milk of the word.



The one is a cheerful giver, the other is of constraint and necessity.

The cry of one is, "that which I would, I do not, and that which I would not, that I do." Rom. vii. The other might, with equal justness, say, 'The evil that I desire, I do not, and the good to which I have no desire I do.'

The law of God, written in the heart, is a principle by which the godly man is actuated. His eye need not to be commanded to see, nor his ear to hear, nor his will to obey: all these being under the influence of grace, they would, if they could, always hear, see, and obey. The spirit is willing, though the flesh is weak. As face answers to face in a glass, so do the heart and the commandment go together. "I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart." Ps. xl. 8.

But is it always thus with us? Do we meet no hindrances, no impediments in our Christian course? Alas! yes, a little, a very little thing often puts us out of the way, and our chariot wheels drive heavily. We may be hindered, but can we fall? Can Christ's freemen, who have received the spirit of adoption, return to bondage? Are they not told, that if they

fall, they shall rise, and again, that they shall not greatly fall? Many such encouragements and promises are held out to them. Some say they may, and do return to bondage; others say they never can. They never do return to the slavish bondage of Egypt, but they are again brought "into captivity to the law of sin which is in their members." Rom. vii. 23. This captivity they bring upon themselves, and they need the warning voice of Paul, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?" and the farther exhortation which says, "Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not again entangled with the yoke of bondage." If we go back to the law for justification, we are debtors to do the whole law, and Christ is become of no effect to us—we are fallen from grace. Those who are in Christ Jesus have entered into the glorious liberty of the children of God; the law of love is their law, the new law which he proclaimed, his own golden rule, never to be disannulled: "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets." "All the law is fulfilled in one short sen-

tence—Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” Thus “faith worketh by love.” If we be led of the Spirit we are not under the law, neither do we walk after the flesh; and the fruits of the Spirit in our lives will be the evidence to the world that we are Christ’s—his property, redeemed and purchased by him for his own peculiar people, separated for his use and service.

O how great, how wonderful, how incomprehensible is the deliverance which Christ has obtained for us, who “were also sometime foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.” Titus iii. 3. “For when we were the servants of sin, we were free from righteousness.” Rom. vi. 20, and John viii. 34, 2 Peter ii. 19.

“In time past we walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” We were even as they are, under the control of Satan, and still should be, if, by grace, we had not been arrested and saved. No goodness, no merit attracted that mercy. We were dead in trespasses and sins. We were, even as others, the children of wrath, fulfilling the desires of the

flesh and the mind : in which state we were rescued as brands plucked out of the burning. Not for anything which he, the holy, righteous God could esteem in us, but because he is rich in mercy, and for the great love wherewith he loved us, “that he might shew in time to come the exceeding riches of his grace in kindness towards us through Jesus Christ.”

## CHAPTER XIV.

*To be subject to, or under the law as a means of salvation entails a curse on all we have and all we do. Regeneration and conversion.*

HAD we continued under the law we must also have remained under its curse, as it admits of not one failure in one jot or tittle. The slightest breach can never be repaired by future endeavours or diligence : the record is written against us, which no tears of repentance can ever blot out. The sentence is gone forth, extensive and universal : *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.* They shall be cursed in the city, and in the field, in the basket, and in the store, in the fruit of their body and their land ; they shall be cursed in their going out, and coming in. Cursing, vexation, and rebuke shall rest upon all belonging to them and all they undertake to do. Their blessings shall be turned into a curse. The rain from heaven shall come down to destroy them ; they shall be smit-

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ten before their enemies, and driven seven ways before them. Pestilence shall cleave unto them ; and consumption, and fever, and inflammation, and extreme burning, and the sword, and blasting, and mildew, shall pursue them until they perish. Deut. xxviii.

But Christ's free men are free indeed : no curse can fall heavily upon their heads ; the snare is broken, which can never take them captive again. They never shall be Satan's bonds slaves, for they are not under the law, but under grace. Sin shall have no more the dominion over them. They may fall into sin, but shall never be the servants of sin again. They shall not, they cannot greatly fall whom Christ upholds. Grace given will never be withdrawn : they will not be permitted to sin, it is impossible they should beyond the reach of grace, which is boundless.

The sins of the believer may cloud his present enjoyments ; may overshadow his comforts, for he who walks not after the Spirit, cannot hope to abound in the consolations of the Spirit, nor in the light of the Spirit, if he turn into the ways of darkness ; yet he shall turn again and be restored to the joy of salvation. The Lord will lift up upon him the light of his countenance when he returns from his wicked ways, for although the pro-

mises of grace are absolute, those of peace and joy in believing, are conditional. Regeneration is an irreversible decree, having once taken place, it is for ever; the regenerated soul is saved freely and unconditionally. The work is *finished*, therefore secure. What is done, never will, nor never can be undone. But as sin still wars in the fleshly members, the soul must turn to God, every day, every hour, with such confessions as those of the returning prodigal, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." Then will his Father meet, and embrace him, and will put on him his best robe, the spotless robe of righteousness, and grace shall be the ring on his hand, and his feet shall be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

The work of regeneration is at once a complete finished work done in us and for us; the work of conversion is a protracted work: it is that of every day, of every moment; for as we are continually sinning we must continually turn. "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? Turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope;" turn from sin to Jesus in whom is fulness of salvation.

We are like dying embers which need continually to be fanned into a flame; grace is the fan which must ever be blowing upon us: we

must be quickened into a spirit of obedience; faith must be in exercise, then shall we find a reality in those promises which are conditional,—  
“To him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I shew the salvation of God.” Is. l. 23.  
“As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy;” which rule is in newness of life in Christ Jesus. Gal. vi. “Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee in the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.” Rev. iii. 10.  
“And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever.” Is. xxxii. 17. “Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways.” Is. lxiv. 5. “If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.” “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me : and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.” “If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” John xiv.



Though the pardon of the Lord's people is unconditional, and therefore sure, yet they, by their sins, may lose the comfortable assurance of it. They may be deprived of the evidence and sense of forgiveness; for how can their minds find peace in the very act of disobedience? How can they at that guilty moment, of crucifying the Son of God afresh, be blest with the full assurance of being his children?—In his commission of sin, “He hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.” 2 Peter i. 9. New fears, new doubts, new troubles assail him. He cannot be persuaded that he is pardoned and justified, and yet fall.

Our sins may bring upon us the hidings of God's face, if not total desertion. “For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him. I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in his way, &c.” Is. lvii. 17. Though God does not eternally, he partially separates himself from the believer. “Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you.” Is. lix. 2.

We cannot grieve the Holy Spirit with impunity. If we follow not his counsel, we shall not have his consolations. He will withdraw himself behind a cloud which we have not

faith to see through. The soul's resting-place is veiled—its security, its evidences, its peace can no longer be discerned. With David we may say, "this is our infirmity." No doubt our faith is very weak, when we look to ourselves for assurance to those titles of which we were formerly certain. If we ever had a well-grounded hope of pardon in an interest in Christ, we ought to hold fast that which was given us; but in returning to sin we turn from Christ, and lose his strength, without which we are weakness itself, and God suffers us to feel it, that we may be humbled under the sense of it. We must be brought to feel our dependence upon God by being made sensible of our weakness without him. He still is the refuge of the soul, in whom is mercy enough to cover all our sins be they ever so numerous and aggravated. We must set ourselves to the work of believing this, and we shall find that there is grace enough in Christ to heal this fresh wound. Fresh instances of grace are shewn in our sins being discovered to us. Our not being permitted to continue in a course of sin is a source of much consolation. If our peace of mind depend upon our own walking we must quickly lose it; if it depend on Christ, it can never be destroyed.

There is a real, substantial, abiding peace,

and an apprehended peace. The believer may have real peace in respect of his state, yet want the sense of it in respect of his own apprehension.

We may distinguish between the foundation and being, of the christian's peace. Its foundation is not in us, but in Christ; not in our holiness, but in his righteousness; not in our walking, but in his suffering and in the sprinkling of his blood upon our guilty conscience. In Him is our peace. He is the spring of our peace who has given us his peace, and in whom we have peace. It is purchased by his obedience, and must be cherished by our own. Though we cannot sin away our former pardon, we can so sin, as to be deprived of our present peace, which will not be communicated while we are in the act of disobedience.

A christian may be in bondage even while in the way of duty. He may serve God, yet not with a willing mind, not with that freedom and enlargement of heart in which he once served him, not with cheerfulness and delight running in the way of God's commandment. After David had sinned, he entreated that the free Spirit of God might be restored to him; not that he was ever deprived of it, but he wanted the sensible attestation—he wanted its

operations—he wanted joy and ease, lightness and freedom to run the race set before him. Though the eye naturally sees, and the ear hears that in which it delights; yet if those members be diseased it will be painful to see or hear; and the most pleasing objects will be divested of their charms. In the same way spiritual deadness makes every duty irksome and laborious. Thus though sin cannot bring a man back into servitude, it may shackle his members—it may blunt his feelings—it may engender distrust and a servile spirit of fear and sloth: and though he still apply himself to duties, he is disheartened in the performance, and delights not in approaching to God. He does not set about a duty as a hungry man to his food, but rather as a sick man who loathes it. Relapses into sin frequently bring the people of God—those who are his own chosen and precious ones, into this kind of bondage.

## CHAPTER XV.

*The duties of the believer are not his merits.*

DOES christian freedom consist with duties performed with a view to a recompense ? Duties are not merits, therefore can deserve no reward. Yet this is not the doctrine most relished. The Council of Trent denounces a curse upon those who say that a justified person does not merit eternal life by his obedience. Proud, presumptuous thought to suppose that by any thing we can do we may merit heaven ! It is the heathen's creed, that by enduring torments here, he shall attain happiness hereafter. Penance, fasts, prayer, good works as wages paid to purchase heaven are of the same nature. If such an object could be attained what would not man do ? ' I would swim through a sea of brimstone, if I might compass heaven at last,' is a speech said to have been made by some one. Fain would the proud heart of man reckon that of debt, which

God has decreed to be of free grace : fain would he purchase the free gift of God, but that may not be. We are assuredly required to do the works to which God has " created us in Christ Jesus." And which *He* " before ordained that we should walk in them." Eph. ii. 10. Christ " gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Titus ii. 14. These works wrought in us, are no way meritorious in regard to our doing them. Yet we are encouraged by promises, that in doing the will of God there is great recompence of reward. In the way of obedience, the recompence is found if God vouchsafe to acknowledge the work as His own, and us as the instruments by which he performs it. It is not to pay an arrear of debt, that we are permitted to work, but it is grace free, unmerited, which set us apart, " a peculiar people, zealous of good works." The wages we earn, is death : but that which is bestowed upon us is eternal life. It is the inheritance of a son ; not worked for, not merited, not earned, but freely given.

If our sufferings be not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed, how should our works bear the comparison? Our works, which are, the very best of them,

in their nature sinful, so that if the iniquity of our holy things were not cleansed, they would condemn us, if no other transgression did, before Him "who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." 'If a man should serve God a thousand years, he could never by that service deserve half a day, nay, not one moment of time in eternal glory,' was a saying of Anselme.

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Titus iii. 5—7.

Even when purified by the blood of sprinkling, our works are in no way the means of our salvation, otherwise it could not be said, that by grace we are saved. Grace cannot be called grace, if it admit any mixture of deservings.

Our principle of obedience is not in reference to things already bestowed. The Covenant of God in Christ Jesus, is to pardon our sins, to give us grace, to give us glory, which things being purchased for us, we are not required to work that we may obtain them, yet God having furnished them as incentives to quicken our

obedience, we may view them in that light. "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die ; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." Rom. viii. 13. "Be ye stedfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know, that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." 1 Cor. xv. 58. Looking for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, St. Peter exhorts the brethren, "to be diligent, that they may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless." "He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption ; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting ; and let us not be weary in well-doing : for in due season we shall reap if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." Gal. vi. 8—10. We are told, that if we suffer with Christ, we shall also reign with him. These incentives, these motives we may keep in view in our works, and in our afflictions, for so far we have scriptural authority. Of Moses, it is said, that he chose, "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season ; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches



than the treasures in Egypt : for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward." Heb. xi. 25, 26. Paul in commending this acting of faith in Moses holds it out for our imitation. He says of himself. " This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Phil. iii. 13, 14. And he speaks of God as rendering to every man according to his deeds, the revelation of his righteous judgment, to the impenitent wrath, which he had treasured up unto himself : but " to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life." Rom. ii. 5—9. " Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil. But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good." 9, 10. Here is an eternal reward promised, begun in this life in the enjoyment of God, and Christ, and the Spirit ; it is perfect holiness, perfect freedom, and is indeed the fruition of grace glorified.

By faith, Moses knew of those things which were laid up for him ; he saw Him who was invisible, and those rewards which were far preferable to the fleeting pleasures of sin. The reward was before him ; Faith fixed his eye

upon it, he had no doubt, no wavering in his mind concerning the gladdening truth, his part was allotted in those things which were reserved ; his possession of the glory was sure.

He esteemed the reproach of Christ above all the treasures of Egypt, for he had in prospect the recompence of reward. But did he expect to work for this reward ? To purchase this glory by any act of his ? No, certainly, knowing that it was already reserved for him ; believing that he should enter into the possession, he despised the riches and pleasures of this world which he thought not worthy to be compared with it. With such a view, we may take all present things joyfully, even to the spoiling of our goods, knowing in ourselves, that we have in heaven, a better and an enduring substance, " Cast not away therefore, your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward." Heb. x. 34, 35.

Herein is no bondage, but true Christian liberty, our recompence of reward is in believing, hoping, expecting that all the promises of God in Christ Jesus are all yea, and Amen—as sure to us, as the word of God himself. He will bless us, and never depart from doing us good. He is our Father, our God who hath pardoned all our sins, who remembers not against

us former iniquities, and who has reserved in heaven for us such glorious enjoyments, as on earth, we are incapable of comprehending. Here is the ground of our encouragement to serve the Lord ; a quickening incentive in " whatsoever we do, to do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men ; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance." Col. iii. 23, 24.

" Having therefore such precious promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness, both of flesh and spirit." 2 Cor. vii. 1. The Apostle does not say, let us do this, that we may have such precious promises, but having them, let us obey. Do not think that I would lessen a Christian's deed, nor would withdraw the fuel, much less cast water upon that which should quicken him to obey. But first, I say, I conceive that this is not in the deed, riches is not there, prosperity is not there ; but mercy, but a blessing is there. It will be a far greater advantage to obedience, and an incentive to quicken us in obedience, to consider that the promise is made ; and we are not to obey that we may have it, but having such promises, how ought we to obey ?

Do we keep the commandments of God in reference to receiving temporal blessings as a reward ?

What manner of man is he who would be actuated by such a principle? Men of the world mind the things of the world, and do nothing from right motives, worldly advantages are all they seek after, and it may truly be said of them as of the Jews, that they assemble themselves for corn and oil, and wine, the gratification of time in all things, without any view to eternity. If they do God service, it is for their own profit; they seek not him, but what they expect to receive from him; they follow him, not for his miracles, but for the loaves and fishes. Having no internal spring of action, when the outward weight is taken off, like a clock, they stand motionless. They exclaim "who will shew us any good?" They count godliness no gain, unless it bring them the gain they seek, and if, on the contrary it bring a reproach, or loss, or persecution, they are quickly offended, and throw aside the mask which they had put on, merely to serve some mercenary purpose, and he who serves from such motive will serve the master who pays the highest wages, whether it be God or Satan.

To those whom the love of God moves to obedience there are precious promises, "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." "The Lord God is a sun and

shield: the Lord will give grace and glory." Psalm lxxxiv. 11. The Lord himself is the light and defence of his people to whom the promise is verified. "I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them." Isaiah lxi. 8. "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts;" Jer. xxxi. 33. "And will be their God, and they shall be my people." "I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: and I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good with my whole heart, and with my whole soul." Jer. xxxii. 39—41. "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." Psalm xcvi. 11. Such promises are thus reiterated throughout the Scripture for the support and consolation of believers. But they are not to set their minds upon worldly prosperity. Their Lord and Saviour promised not temporal honours or advantages, but the reverse; that they should be hated of all men, and be brought before Princes, and cast into prison,

and persecuted as evil for his name's sake ; and that those who thus treated them should think they did God service. " That bonds and afflictions await them." Acts xx. 23. They were told before of these tribulations ; that all the people of God were " appointed thereunto." 1 Thess. iii. " And that if their hope were in this life only, they are of all men most miserable." 1 Cor. xv. 19. That this does not relate merely to the persecutions of the disciples on the first promulgation of the Christian religion, other passages of Scripture clearly shew, for we are told, that all who " will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." 2 Tim. iii. 12. The life of the Christian must be one of self-denial. " If any man will come after me " says our Lord, " let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." Luke ix. 23. He tells them what great things they must *suffer* for his name's sake.

As to temporal good, they may trust in him who feeds the young ravens when they cry, that He will add unto them all that is needful for them ; " If you be willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land."

David said, that from youth to age, during the whole course of his life, he had never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging

bread." Psalm xxxvii. 25. And by St. Paul we are told, that " Godliness hath the promise of this life, and of that which is to come." 1 Tim. iv. 8.

Experience, however, sufficiently proves, that those who are made willing and obedient, do not always eat of the good of the land ; they who do wickedly often prosper, while the most devoted Christians are brought into great straits and difficulties. Through many tribulations they must enter into the kingdom of heaven : but they shall be brought safely through ; for Jesus is the refiner, always sitting by, always watching, and when he sees them so purified that they reflect back his own image, they shall be taken out of the furnace, and shall know that all things have been working together for their good, and that not one tittle has failed which He has promised ; for Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the word, the promise of God, *never*, no never. In blessing, he will bless us throughout eternity.

As for our works or deservings, we need seek no reward for them, Jesus himself turns us from such a false ground of hope : " When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants : we have done that which

was our duty to do." Luke xvii. 10. But who can say so much; who can say that they have done what was their duty to do?—"O my leanness, my leanness," we have reason to cry out continually in all we undertake. We do nothing to save, but everything to condemn ourselves, therefore it is by grace we are saved, and boasting is excluded.

All things are working together for our good, those things which are denied, as well as those which are granted; present losses are often future blessings, and contrariwise, present enjoyments, future evils. We should endeavour to lie passive in the hands of our heavenly Father, wishing that *His* will, not ours, may be done, for truly nothing is bad for us but that which might be an obstacle to our eternal happiness.

If the glory of God be the main spring of our actions, then will His Spirit direct us to do what is right. "If the eye be single, the whole body shall be full of light;" as the contrary, if the eye be evil, if any sinister motive impel as to action, then will the whole body be full of darkness.



## CHAPTER XVI.

*The believer though pardoned is exhorted to pray to be led in the way of holiness, " Ask, and it shall be given you." Ask unceasingly.*

It has been said that Christ having purchased all for us, pardon, peace, and every needful blessing, prayer is unnecessary. But being invited and commanded, how could we omit that duty ? which indeed we ought not to consider a mere duty but a privilege, to which the promise is annexed, " Ask, and ye shall have, seek, and ye shall find, knock, and it shall be opened unto you." " Call on me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver you." The Apostle prays that utterance may be granted to him, and also that he might be delivered from unreasonable men. " Is any sick among you ? Let him call for the elders of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil, in the name of the Lord : and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up."

James iv. 14, 15. A blessing is here promised to the means used in faith. That the anointing with oil was for medicinal purposes we have the authority of St. Mark vi. 13. Though there is no condemnation to any who are in Christ Jesus, yet daily sins need daily pardon, else our Lord would not have taught his disciples to ask for forgiveness daily, as for daily bread.

When we ask for our daily bread it is an acknowledgment that by the same bountiful hand all our wants, temporal and spiritual, are supplied. It would be just as absurd to say, that we need not eat to satisfy hunger, or drink to take away thirst, as to say that there is no need to confess our sins that we may be humbled under a deep sense of them, nor to hear the word, that our understanding may be enlarged, our affections quickened, our faith strengthened. Ordinances are made use of for the increase of our graces, and the abatement of our corruptions, as works of charity are to relieve the poor and needy in their extremities; and we are called to walk in such ways of obedience to adorn our profession, to dignify the Gospel, to glorify God, to benefit the saints, to win others. These are the ends which they are to serve, while we acknowledge that all is the purchase of Christ, and of God's providing,

who, though we have great need of him, has no need of us: His glory, his gospel, his cause depend not upon our exertions. God has instruments enough in his own power to carry on his plans and purposes.

Though Christ has purchased for us every grace, and every good, yet God requires that we should seek for them. Though all is freely given for his own name's sake, not for any good thing which he saw in us. "Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel." Ez. xxxvi. 32.

Yet, though God bestows his blessings, although his promises are free and absolute, yet he signifies his will to give in the way of seeking: "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." Verse 37.

God bestows all which his believing, praying people need, not as the purchase of their prayers, which cannot be the meriting cause of any mercy. Though there can be no such procuring cause, yet it is a subservient means. When God has a purpose of mercy he stirs up the heart to seek, and when he stirs up the heart to seek, it is an evidence that it is his purpose to

bestow : and thus we are encouraged to come boldly to the throne of grace.

But does he not reveal himself to us except when we seek him ? Yes, often, as his own word avouches : " I am found of them that sought me not." Is. lxx. 1. Indeed, we never think of seeking him until his Spirit breathe upon us, and causes us to seek and to find. The thirst is first created in us, and then follows the invitation, " Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money : come ye, buy, and eat ; yea, come buy wine and milk without money and without price." Isaiah lv. 1. " I will give unto him that is athirst freely." Rev. xxi. 6. We bring to God what he first bestowed. We bring to him the desires after him, which he first created in us, and then he abundantly satisfies his own desires within us. He requires nothing from us but what he gives. He commands us to believe the promises, which we could not do unless he gave us faith. He gives us strength to come to him, and righteousness when we do come. As the sea sends out its waters to bear us upon its bosom, so the Lord issues out those graces which draw us to himself ; and then the gracious language of heaven communicates peace, joy, and rest to the soul.

The scriptures are very clear in proclaiming to us our justification before we can work, therefore our work cannot justify us. Without faith we can do nothing ; by faith we are justified, and if faith be not given, we can never have it. Without Christ we are as dead men, senseless and motionless, in every good and right way. "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life." In having in him life and union, we also have justification. These are simultaneous consequences, the concomitant issue of one spring, one source, to which the performance of duties are not the preceding conditions, but the subsequent fruits.

## CHAPTER XVII.

*God foreknew the fall of man, and fore-ordained his justification by faith.*

THE understanding of many is puzzled on these subjects by foolish and unlearned questions, which truly may be said to engender strife, and subtle disputations ; yet the darkness is in their own minds, not in the revelation of God, which, as the light of the morning sun arising upon a dark world, disperses before its rays the mists and shadows of night.

God, to whom the power and glory belongs, may possibly enable me, who am the meanest labourer he ever bid work in his vineyard, to expatiate farther on these important truths.

That which God has manifested to us in these days, is no new thing, but what he from all eternity had decreed. As God foreknew the fall of man, he foreordained his justification, and the means whereby the work should be effected ; therefore, it may be said, that the justification of man was antecedent to the fall of man. That

which was beforehand decreed in the purpose of Jehovah could not depend in the slightest degree upon the merits or demerits of man. Being justified in decree, we are justified from everlasting, before the worlds were formed, or the heavens were made. And we are meritoriously justified in the sufferings and death of Christ; our full debt is paid, though we know it not until faith is given us, from whence comes the assurance to ourselves, that we are freely and perfectly justified. In Him who is the spouse of his church we shall be presented "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing," truly glorified—all fair without. If this be not admitted, the order of Scripture will be overturned—the beautiful fabric of electing grace will be thrown down—the clear shining of the truth will be darkened, and the ways of God dishonoured. If we deny this doctrine, we deny the sovereignty of God, and obscure what he has clearly revealed.

From erroneous conceptions this doctrine is made a stumbling block to many. A cloud of unbelief darkens the glad tidings of free, electing grace. Why is it so? The heart of man must be humbled, must be softened to admit of the entrance of that "word which giveth light and understanding to the simple." Ps. cxix. 130.

“They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine.” Isaiah xxix. 24. Christ will not suffer his simple ones, his little flock to go on erring and straying continually on the dark mountains of unbelief. He will send out his light and his truth to guide them, and to bring them to his holy hill, his resting place; “The path of the just is as a shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” Prov. iv. 18. “As many as were ordained unto eternal life believed.” Acts xiii. 48. There is no Scripture of private interpretation. These things are published for the edification of all believers to whom they come with power and strong consolation; not (as he slanderously reported of them) finding joy in the condemnation of others, but in their own salvation. Humbled and self-condemned, the true believer clings to Jesus, in whom there is salvation for his guilty soul. Here he finds an efficient means, which he cannot find in himself, merit is excluded by this doctrine. “For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth.” Rom. ix. 11. “He that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works.” Heb. iv. 10. We



are exhorted not to harden our hearts by unbelief of the word preached : while we do so, we are tossed about like the troubled sea, and cannot enter into rest. It is not by cavilling at a doctrine, but by searching the Scriptures in a child-like simplicity, that we can arrive at the truth.

In Jesus is the sabbath of the soul ; in him alone there is rest from sin, rest in God, a rest, a peace, a joy, which praises, admires, and glorifies God to all eternity. Here is an " anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast," a safe harbour in a troubled sea : believers see danger around while they are sheltered, for they hear the voice of Jesus, " Fear not, little flock ; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Luke xii. 32. It is a kingdom which I have purchased for you : it is your right, your inheritance : go in and possess it.

" Fear not : ye have done all this wickedness : yet turn not aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart. For the Lord will not forsake his people for his great name's sake : because it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people." 1 Sam. xii. 22. To you are these gracious words addressed, who were chosen in Christ " before the foundation of the world, that ye should be holy and without blame before him in love : having predestinated

us unto the adoption of children according to the good pleasure of his will." "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called,"<sup>1</sup>

Here is an invitation of love, and an incentive to yield a willing service to the Lord.

If it be sinful to slight the consolations of God, it is no less so, to make light of his encouragements. God affords them to help faith against sense, and to furnish faith with arguments against carnal reasoning; to raise us above the straits and difficulties of this up-hill world; to render its treasures too trifling for our desires; and to give us a spirit not to be daunted by its roughness.

Paul was troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus: and willing to be delivered up to death for Jesus' sake: knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus should raise up us also. For which cause in labours oft, he fainted not. He looked beyond the

<sup>1</sup> Eph. i. Read the chapter, and also the 8th of Romans.

things which are seen to those which are not seen. And we, in having the same view, walking not by sight, but by faith, walk thankfully and cheerfully, being made strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might; able to endure and to submit to all which God disposes; and not only so, but to rejoice in suffering; and in our lowest estate burst out in songs of praise with the apostle, who counted not his life dear unto him, so he might win Christ, and be found of him.

It is said, faith comes by hearing, which shows the necessity of the means of grace to dispel the clouds of error which veil the truth from our eyes. By the means of grace we are prepared to receive Christ; our miserable state by nature is discovered to us; we see our sinfulness and our need of a Saviour. The means of grace lead us to Christ and the promises; they kindle in our soul the desire, the earnest seeking, the hunger and thirst, and those dawns of faith and conversion; the harbingers of Christ, before that morning of grace when he comes to dwell with his people and they with him. John came "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord;" His was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." And the prophecy was thus

fulfilled, which describes the coming of the Lord, as of some temporal prince whose path is opened by those who precede him. After having proclaimed to Jerusalem (the church), the comforting assurance, "that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned:"—a work really accomplished in the everlasting decree and counsel of God, then she hears that "she has received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." A pardon not purchased by her doings, but which the Lord's hand had already done for her. The harbinger goes before to proclaim the good news; the voice cries in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a high way for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Is. xl. 1—5.

The coming of the kingdom of Christ was thus revealed; and with the King of glory came his attendants, the graces of his Holy Spirit,—that peace which passeth understanding, and that joy which is unspeakable and full of glory. Yet Christ may enter a house without his followers. There is many a gracious soul to whom

the assurance of faith has not been given, nor the fulness of joy communicated.

When faith brings assurance, it also brings peace, and an earnest desire to serve God for himself alone, without reference to future reward or punishment. There is an anecdote related of a woman, who being met with fire in one hand, and water in the other, was asked what she purposed to do with them? She answered, 'With this water I would quench the fire of hell, and with this fire I would burn up the joys of heaven, if I might serve God without fear of reward or punishment, but singly and only for himself alone.'

This woman had good desires, but she had not clear conceptions of heaven and glory. There is nothing in heaven that a glorified soul could bear to part with, nothing there superfluous, to be burned or destroyed. It is God's throne of grace and glory.

'Not heaven, O Lord, but God and Christ; rather ten thousand times Christ without heaven, than heaven without Christ: but seeing that thou hast joined them together, and that I cannot enjoy the one without the other, then both, O Lord. But not Christ for heaven, but heaven for Christ, O Lord,' was the devout aspiration of one of old.

A distinction has been made between a Christian's first beginning, and his advancement, or growth in grace. At first he looks upon heaven and hell as the means of driving him from sin; and persuading him to enter into the ways of holiness; but in his deeper search, and farther experience, when he has found Christ to be the way of eternal life, and tasted of his sweetness and preciousness, he serves him with a free spirit and a willing mind. He then discovers a beauty in holiness, and a sweetness in Jesus which forms to him a heaven even here below.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Christ being come, brings the soul and whole man under the law's command, having first taken the law-rod in his own hand and spent it on his own back. Hence the law, which was forcing by power, becomes fettering by love, Christ's own silken cord." "Christ's love shed abroad in a soul works upwards, and facilitates love."—*Marrow of Modern Divinity*. vol. 2. page 145.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

*The glories of heaven represented. Christians may have respect to, or keep in view a future state of enjoyment in all their performances, and sufferings here.*

THE glories of heaven are indefinable; yet by a metaphorical delineation they have been represented to us. "The building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was of pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." Rev. xxi. 18—22.

Such are the brilliant objects in nature, which are made use of to pencil forth the glory which far more excelleth, and the lustre of the bright-

est gems would fade before the reality, as the sun in the meridian blaze of day-light puts out of observation the twinkling of every star. God himself fills the heaven, and all the heavenly places with his glory, for the heaven of heavens cannot contain him.

The glory and brilliancy of sensible objects give but a mean, a very defective representation of that heaven which is filled and encompassed with glories. Believers are called lively stones, very precious indeed, more precious than diamonds, if estimated by the rich price at which they are purchased. What dazzling lustre of the most sparkling gem can be compared with the glory of a glorified saint? The sun itself in all its radiance, cannot be compared to one of these, whose fruition of enjoyment is in God, in Christ, the pearl of great price, and in the Holy Ghost, the only and true Comforter. The perfection and fulness of grace—the soul's eternal sabbath, Jehovah's resting place, a quiet, and safe, and peaceful haven after tossing and panting, and being broken, shipwrecked, and weary.

This is the fulness of that enjoyment for which David longed: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth I desire beside thee." Ps. lxxiii. 25. This is the per-



fection of graces which the people of God earnestly desire. It is a panting after holiness; an assurance that Christ is in them; the hope of glory.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice; though now, for a season if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.”

1 Peter i.

Thoughts of heaven and glory ought to put songs of praise into the hearts and lips of those who are made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

It was reported of Cæsar, that when he was sad, he used to say to himself, “Think that thou art Cæsar.” If he esteemed earthly exaltation sufficient to bear up his spirit in trouble, how much more has the christian to raise his heart in the deepest depression.

The philosophers say, that if men could rise above the second region they would be out of

the reach of all storms, and would find nothing but serenity and clearness. This may be said of the souls whose thoughts are in heaven; they find rest in labour, calm in a storm, tranquillity in a tempest, and peace and comfort amidst their greatest conflicts.

Whilst Peter kept his eye stedfastly fixed upon Jesus, he walked securely through a tempestuous sea; but when he looked from Jesus to the rolling billows, then he began to sink. Though sore let and hindered in running the race set before us, with Jesus in our view, with great might we are succoured, and nothing can overcome us, though passing through storm, sea, and tempest; but when we turn away our eye from Christ, the least trouble causes us to stumble and fall.

He who sees visions of glory will be like Stephen, unmoved by a shower of stones. An heir of glory need not care for the sufferings of time, so soon to be swallowed up in eternity. The prospect of future bliss will smooth down present conflicts, and give us content under all. We can bear poverty, knowing that we shall be rich. We can bear contempt and shame, knowing that we shall be honoured. We can bear affliction, knowing we shall be comforted. We can bear a prison, knowing that we shall be enlarged.

We can take our place with Dives at the door, knowing that we shall be in Abraham's bosom. We can bear the loss of all things here, knowing that we shall gain all hereafter, and more than all, when we sit down with Jesus at the right hand of God, "who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame." All that we can endure here, is but for a short season, a day, an hour, a little moment; and hereafter we shall be in the arms of God, in his eternal embraces, his never ending joys. Welcome that sorrow that ends in joy. Welcome that trouble that ends in ease—that cross, which prepares for a crown, and that death, which ushers in eternal life.

Heaven is promised as a reward, a future state of enjoyment, which christians should always keep in view; and that we may conceive of it aright, let us first separate it from that which the carnal mind represents as a place of freedom from all misery, and where there is the fulness of all pleasures and happiness. In this they say truly; but there are different kinds of misery, and different kinds of happiness. The misery and happiness of the carnal mind is that which suits its own bias, or inclination. There is a Turkish heaven of pleasures, and a christian's heaven of an eternal sabbath—a rest in Jehovah,

in whom there is rest: it is a rest after commotions. "Here the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." All our former pantings after him, are now rests in *him*, who is a central place of rest. It is a rest, a glory to be imagined here, but to be enjoyed in its fulness hereafter. It is the rest which remaineth for the people of God, and to which rest and enjoyment of God they may have an eye in every thing that they do to his glory. The more we seek the enjoyment of God in our obedience, the more exalted is our obedience, and the more zeal and alacrity of spirit do we evince towards it. If we do duties without seeking communion with God and Christ, our duties are not sound: but we may look unto Christ in all our obedience, we may follow after him in the way of holiness. We cannot purchase him by our obedience; but we can journey towards him in our obedience, and walk in his ways with respect to the more perfect enjoyment of him. We may desire the Spirit, the only Comforter, serving God with respect to the enjoyment of him who is the comforting, sanctifying Spirit within us. As it was said by John, when his mind was full of divine revelation, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." Rev. i. 10.

May we not obey God, and serve him, while

looking to him for perfection and fulness of grace? May we not serve him here with a desire of an increase of grace? May we not walk in his ordinances, and in the way of all duty, keeping in view the graces which we shall find in that path—more faith, more love, more zeal, more brokenness of heart. These are the rewards of our obedience to which we may have respect. “To him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I shew the salvation of God.” This is what we breathe after, what we pray for, what we hope for, even perfection, satisfaction. “When I awake,” saith David, “I shall be satisfied with thy likeness. Certainly that which is the satisfaction of the saints hereafter, is their desire here—that which they sigh after in all their services as their satisfaction, may be kept in prospect while in duty.

May we not have respect to a perfect sabbath in the performance of duties? Shall they not tend to rest? Labour ends in rest—rest from that which we strive and pray against. Rest from sin, is rest in God—a rest from all but everlasting praise, and joy, and thanksgiving. May we not labour with respect to such a rest? May we not serve with an eye to such a sabbath? “Even for this cause we labour and faint not.”

May not a Christian serve God having respect to these things ? Is he a Christian who holds them not up in all his services ? What else is salvation, heaven, and glory but this ? Or what conception can they have of salvation, heaven and glory, who have no respect to them in duties ? They must make a very false estimate of such things, and level them to their own carnal capacity, instead of reviewing them in their true spiritual nature.

None shall own heaven as his happiness, to which he may not have respect in his services. If we speak of heaven abstractedly ; it is but a notion, and can never make a man happy : but if we speak of it conjointly, heaven with God, and heaven in God ; as our happiness, so our holiness, we may carry a respect to it in all our obedience ; and by this criterion, an humble Christian may satisfy the scruples and misgivings of his mind, who from a tenderness of conscience, fears that his services are hypocritical, and vain-glorious, that self is his aim, when he does service with respect to heaven and glory ; to whom I would say, that we never find that God charges any with hypocrisy for this. But he charges those who have respect to this world, and the things belonging to it, as he said to the Israelites,

“ You have not fasted and prayed unto me, you assembled together for corn, and oil, and wine.”

Conceive heaven to be what it is, the Christian's heaven, and the Christian's eye may soar to it continually, in all he does as his great recompence of reward, without any aim to corrupt self, in any way : not from any motive of the flesh in opposition to the spirit, but the spirit in opposition to the flesh. The more our thoughts are in heaven, the more spiritual will be our actions ; not separated from God, but done in God. Self lost in him, and found in him when swallowed up in his likeness.

But I do not merely tell you that you *may* have respect to heaven and glory in your obedience, but I tell you that you *must* keep them in view ; for that is it, which God hath set down to fortify our hearts against fear and trouble, and to bear us up under calamity. When Christ would arm his disciples against all fears and evils, he tells them of the kingdom which it was the Father's good pleasure to give them.

Would you walk cheerfully ? Would you walk thankfully ? Would you be strong to do, and willing to suffer ? Would you rejoice in sufferings ? Would you be submissive to all God's disposals, then you must have an eye to the recompence of reward.

## CHAPTER XIX.

*Man in his natural state is the willing slave of sin.*

MAN'S Character is described in its natural state as being disobedient, "serving divers lusts." Titus iii. 3. His obedience to sin is not forced. It is his willing, his voluntary, his delightful service. It is no forced tribute, but the free-will offering of the enslaved mind. "Whosoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin." John viii. 34. The slavery of the soul is a fearful bondage.

The Israelites were cruelly dealt with under Pharaoh's task-masters, and so are the miserable beings under the Turkish galleys, but such bondage affects the body only. To be carnal, and sold under sin; to be like Ahab, of whom it is said, that, "he sold himself to work wickedness," to become willing slaves in such a service, how much more grievous are such fetters than the most severe vassalage of the



body,—when God gives over to a reprobate mind, saying, “ You that are filthy, be filthy still.”

It is a slavery of which we are insensible ; we are in chains, yet think ourselves free ; a heavy weight is upon us, yet we groan not under it, because we feel it not. We are cold, we are insensible, which is the worst state we can be in. A burning fever is more hopeful than a lethargy, for which reason, a skilful physician sometimes induces fever to cure the lethargic state ; so a wounded and troubled state of mind is better than an insensible one. “ The strong man keeps the house when all is at peace.” A man may be in bondage to men, and able to ransom himself, if not by his own power, yet, by the help and contributions of others. But no man can redeem his own soul ; no, nor yet by the aid and contributions even of saints and angels ; their oil can but serve themselves.

Christ's proper work, and also his greatest work is, “ to redeem his people from their sins.” He bought us, not with perishable things ; not with silver and gold ; the redemption of souls is more precious: its price is blood, the rich blood of the immaculate Lamb of God.

As we were not able to redeem ourselves by

price, neither can we deliver ourselves by power. "While we were sinners, and yet without strength, Christ died for us." If tears and prayers of our own could help us out of bondage, even those we cannot command; but nothing of ours can avail. We are as men in quicksands, who the more they struggle, the deeper they sink: striving in our own strength, we become more deeply entangled in the chain of our sins, from which the pitifulness of God's great mercy can alone loose us.

Satan often binds the chain as a cruel gaoler to bars of brass, and gates of iron, which cannot be broken. He rules in the hearts of the children of disobedience. They "are taken captive by him at his will." 2 Tim. ii. 26. And the enthralldom is of such a nature as that no one performance of his prisoner is free; though he do the works of a freeman, they partake not of the same nature; his prayer is that of a slave, not of a son; he weeps as a slave, fearful of the lash: but sheds no tear of contrition, because of hatred to sin, and love to God: the spirit is in bondage, there is no part free, nothing natural and easy; no delight in any good thing.

Such is the dismal state in which Christ found all whom he came to save, and in which all remain until he sets the captives free, and then,

the natural averseness to good is changed to an unfeigned delight in it. When the command is transcribed on the heart, its cry is, "I delight to do thy will, O my God." Why! How is this so different from its former nature? "Thy law is within my heart," and hence to delight in obedience, and in the ways of God, is now what I earnestly desire. So far as our heart is renewed and sanctified, so far do we wish in all things to conform to the law and will of God.

When the prodigal son came to himself, that is, to his right mind—for when under the dominion of every lawless lust, he may truly be said to have been in a delirium, as every unawakened sinner is—when he thought on his ways and longed to return to his father, he would willingly have taken a servant's place, to have been reinstated in the paternal home—the meanest station was all he dared to aspire after. But when he saw a father's arms extended towards him, when he felt the warm embrace of parental love, he was overcome, and his servile fears gave place to a filial desire of obedience. Thus it is with the soul which is brought to Christ, and has tasted of pardoning mercy, and unbounded love in receiving him guilty, polluted as he is, deserving to be abhorred by God and by himself. In remembering his own evil ways,

and his doings which were not good, the believer is loathsome in his own sight for his iniquities, and for his abominations. Ezek. xxxvi. 31. In such a state, being found, and purified, and rescued, all his thoughts are turned to praise and magnify the name of the Saviour, in whom he sees so much beauty. He has tasted of so much mercy, that if he had the strength of an angel, it were all too little to be spent for him; his life, his blood, his spirit, his body—all he has, he would freely give: and his inward contest is not what he hopes to receive from God, but what he can give, “What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?” Ps. cxvi. 12. His willing mind would go through difficulties and dangers, would encompass sea and land, so ardent are his affections, so strong his desires: his heart burns within him as Jesus communes with him on the way.

The law inscribed on tables of stone, may be transcribed, may be copied out, as an outward performance, but when the inward work is done, when the law is written in the heart, when it is transplanted into the soul, then obedience is no strange irksome command, but that which affords delight, even an abundance of delight, which seeks continually more and more, to walk in the ways of God and holiness.

## CHAPTER XX.

*Christians are exhorted to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made them free.*

“STAND fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again in the yoke of bondage.”

The Lord's Jubilee is proclaimed, the day of redemption draws nigh. Let us take heed to ourselves, lest at any time our hearts be overcharged. Let us watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation. If Satan can get us again into bondage, most assuredly he will—many a wily snare is spread upon our paths, and many a soul is taken captive at his will.

Every man should be faithful in that which is entrusted to him. God has entrusted precious things to us, Christian faith, and Christian liberty, and we should be very careful to maintain them.

How much men prize their civil and corporal

liberties ; and how eagerly do they contend for them against those who would deprive them of such inestimable privileges ! and would they not be justly considered men of abject minds, who would forego such privileges, who would for any consideration part with them ?

The emperor Leo issued a severe law, forbidding all men to buy or sell their freedom ; esteeming it madness to part with it. If civil freedom be so precious, and so carefully to be maintained, how much more inestimable is Christian freedom ! A freedom so dearly purchased by the blood of Jesus ! We esteem our civil liberties the greater, in that so much of the blood of our ancestors was shed in obtaining them, and it were base in us to lose that for which they lost their blood. But the freedom wherewith Christ makes us free was bought with richer blood. This was indeed a price, beyond all estimation ! It is a dear-bought freedom, freely bestowed, mercifully revealed, and fully conveyed unto us by the spirit of Christ.

It behoves us to maintain this liberty against the law, by looking neither for justification from the law, nor fearing its condemnation,—by living in respect of practice and obedience, as men not to be cast down, or condemned, nor acquitted, nor justified by the law. It is diffi-

cult to walk in the law, yet live above it ; in the path of duty to observe it, yet to look beyond it for comfort : neither expecting favour from it in point of obedience, nor fearing rigour from thence, in point of failure. Let the law come in to remind you of sin if you fail ; but let it not arrest you : let it not drag you into that court of Justice to be tried and judged for your failings ; for that were to make void the grace of God in Christ.

We are too easily satisfied with ourselves in obedience, and too easily driven from Christ in our failures.

Oh ! that we could learn the better lesson of being nothing in our own strength, and to be all things in Christ's strength. To walk in the law as a rule of sanctification, and yet to live upon Christ and the promises, in point of justification.

Proud nature would fain do something for the purchase of glory. God would have it of grace ; we would have it of debt. God would give, but we would purchase. We have recourse to our prayers and tears as so much purchase money to obtain heaven and glory ; and though we bring not these, we bring that which is equally meritorious in our own estimation. We plead our own qualifications and dispositions to obtain an interest in the promise. This is utterly to cross

the purpose of God's grace ; which no longer requires that we should do this and live ; but that we should believe, and be saved. We are now to walk in the duties of the law with a gospel spirit. " The law was our school-master, to bring us to Christ : " it has served its purpose, and if we build again the things we have destroyed, we make ourselves transgressors. It was well said, by Luther, ' Walk in the heaven of the promise, but in the earth of the law. In the heaven of the promise, in respect of believing : in the earth of the law in respect of obeying, so thou shalt give the law its honour, and Christ his glory.'

Christian liberty is a precious jewel. Suffer not any to rob you of it. Surrender not your judgment or conscience to be disposed of according to the opinions, or subjected to the sentence, and determinations of men. Let neither power, nor policy, force or fraud, deprive us of a jewel so inestimable. " Stand fast, and be not again entangled," &c. Return not again like willing slaves into chains. For a freeman to be brought back to slavery, is worse than if he had never been made free. Therefore take heed, be not ensnared as the fish into the net. We are warned to take heed lest we be deceived. " Let no man deceive you with vain words." Let not your mind



be blinded, let not your understanding be darkened. We often betray our liberty when we might maintain it, and thus we become the servants of men, which proceeds from weakness of head, or wickedness of heart. I therefore exhort the freeman of Christ to maintain his freedom against the law and the deceivings of man. Be not tempted, or threatened out of it, be not bribed, nor frightened, nor forced, nor defrauded of your treasure. Maintain it against whosoever would openly oppugn it, or secretly slander it. Give not up to the opinions of other men, be they ever so learned, or holy in their walk and conversation, merely because it is their opinion, but follow the Apostle's direction, to "prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good." It frequently happens that a high esteem of men for their learning and piety, inclines us to trust in all that they advance, to subject our judgments to their opinions, our conscience to their precepts, &c. Men will suspect a truth, if affirmed by a liar, but they are ready to believe an error, to give credit to an untruth, if affirmed by an honest and faithful man: whatever is advanced by such persons, comes with authority to the mind, and yet it is possible for even these to mistake. It is a dangerous thing to hold up men's persons in too

much admiration. Jude 16. "We know but in part." The most learned and most pious men are imperfect in knowledge, and "see through a glass darkly." The holiest martyrs, who gave up all for Christ, were still but men, subject to error; though they leave behind a strong testimony to the truth, yet their evidence is not infallible, and great as our respect may be for their attainments and character, we must not yield a blind and implicit credence to all they advance. God's word is alone infallible,—to the law and to the testimony. To subject our judgment to the decree of men, to resolve our faith into their authority, is to make men the masters of our faith. To receive our creed from man's authority, is a shred of that garment whereby Babylon is distinguished. It is a mark of the Roman Antichristian Church. And though this be not required of us, yet it is no less done, by many, beside those of whom such implicit faith, and blind obedience is required.

Christian freedom was dearly purchased, and mercifully bestowed, and should not therefore be weakly parted with, nor wilfully maintained. It was given in mercy, and should be retained with judgment. In rejecting, or embracing doctrines, discretion should be used, neither blindly subjecting ourselves to the dogmas nor

determinations of men, however godly and learned, nor rejecting them with a perverse will.

Christian liberty was dearly purchased ;—let it not be abused. We abuse our precious gift, when we use it to the scandal of others. Our liberty is given for our comfort, not for the affliction of others. Some young converts at Corinth, would eat meat offered to idols, for the purpose of shewing their liberty : but the Apostle reproves them, and declares that although all things were lawful for him, yet all things are not expedient. And he instructs them how to exercise Christian liberty, in case of scandal, “ Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty ; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.” Gal. v. 13.

Christ has taken away our former yoke of bondage, not that we should be more unrestrained, but more careful ; not to be an offence to others, but a comfort to ourselves. “ Through thy knowledge shall thy weak brother perish, for whom Christ died.” 1 Cor. viii. 11.

We abuse our Christian liberty by a superstitious use of it ; such as dare venture upon any observations, customs, and gestures, not warranted by the word, act in defiance of it, and step over the bounds which are the prescribed rule of the Christian.

Christian liberty is abused, when the law of God is nullified, by believing that we are exempt from duty ; which would not indeed be freedom, but bondage of the worst description.

The liberty of a Christian is not exemption from service, for it is service : and that man is still in bondage, who considers not the service of God perfect freedom.

We give ourselves too much scope in lawful things. It is easy to pass from the use of a thing to the abuse of it.

It is an abuse of Christian liberty, to deny obedience to lawful authority upon a levelling principle. The powers that be are ordained of God, and as such have a right to claim submission from us in all lawful things.

Finally, we abuse our Christian liberty, when we disengage ourselves from every restraint to which our own will disinclines us. We shall conclude our subject in the words of the Apostle. " For so is the will of God, that with well-doing, ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men : as free, and not using your liberty, for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God." 1 Peter ii. 15, 16.

THE END.

SEELEYS, THAMES DITTON, SURREY.

